

# BLUE PRINT

A close-up photograph of a person's face reflected in a shattered mirror. Two hands are visible, holding and piecing together the broken fragments of the mirror. The background is dark, and the overall mood is somber and reflective.

PIECING  
TOGETHER  
THE BROKEN  
REFLECTION

ISSUE 5-JAN 2021-VOL.81



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Cover photo by Anna Yiannikos

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# COACH HUBER

In honor of Mr. Huber and his legacy, Blueprint is kindly requesting that our readers send in memories, photos, videos, or stories of Mr. Huber so we are able to create our sixth issue in his memory.

Please send your contributions to:  
[ahsblueprint@auhsdschools.org](mailto:ahsblueprint@auhsdschools.org)

Thank you

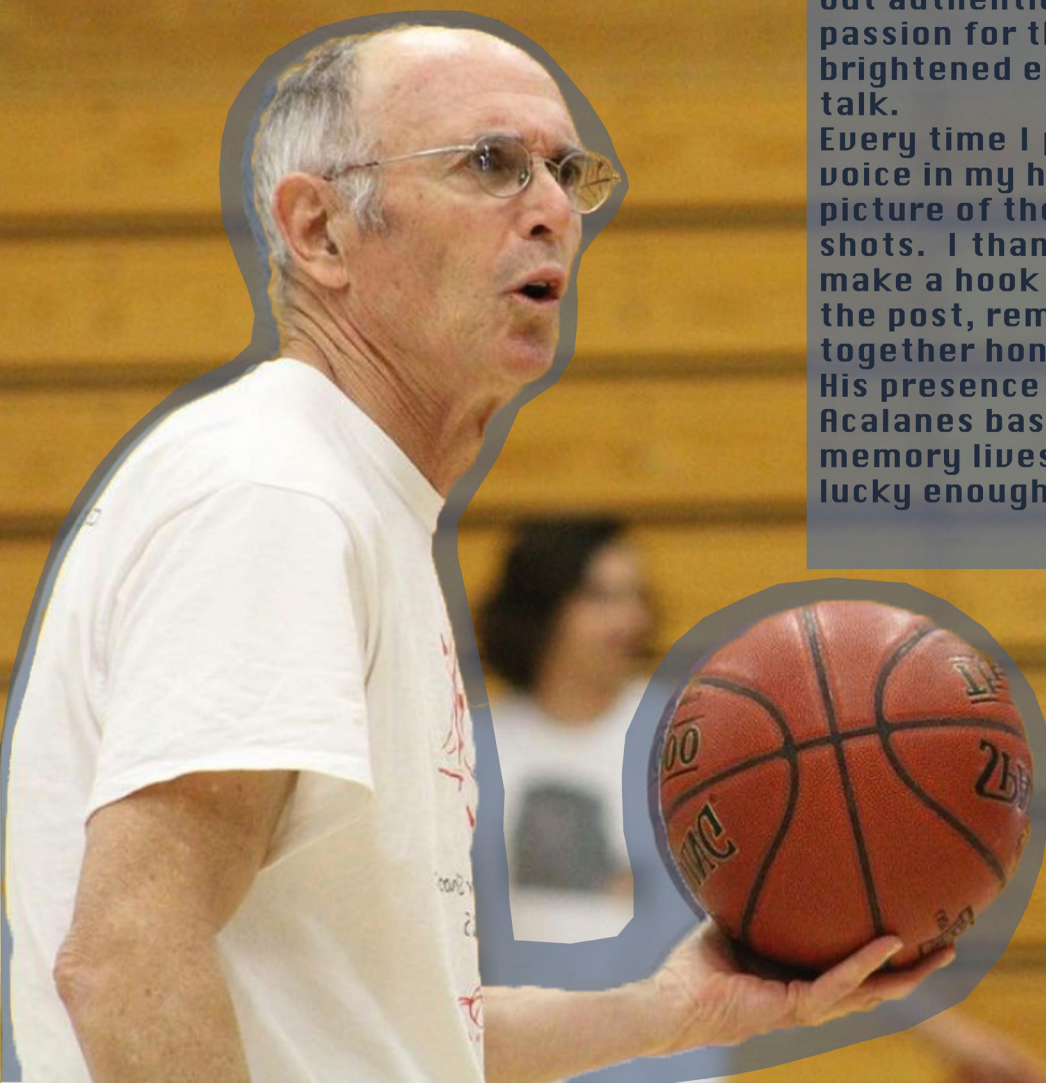
When I was young, I attended Acalanes basketball camps that Huber coached. Each day, he led the campers in drills that I thought were tedious – dribbling, jump stops, and pivots. I couldn't wait for that part of the day to be over, but years later I realized how much I benefited from the attention to detail that he instilled in his campers.

When I had the good fortune to play for Huber on varsity, he brought that same intensity, and would get on us if we didn't do the little things right – keeping our hands up on defense, boxing out, and taking care of the basketball. Huber stressed the little things because of two things that he loved. First he loved the game of basketball, and wanted to see it played the right way. But more importantly, he demonstrated a deep care and attention for his players. Just like he never missed an opportunity to correct a mistake, he doled out authentic praise at a job well done. His passion for the game was infectious, and he brightened every practice and locker room talk.

Every time I play pickup now, I hear his voice in my head, telling me to "take a picture of the basket" lest I miss makeable shots. I thank him silently every time I make a hook shot or a turnaround jumper in the post, remembering the hours we spent together honing those moves.

His presence will be deeply missed by the Acalanes basketball community, but his memory lives on with everyone who was lucky enough to know him.

– John Kalil  
Acalanes 2020 Alum





# Coveted COVID-19 Vaccines Aim to Return Life to Normal

## *Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech vaccines provide hope for a shift to hybrid-learning*

Liam McGlynn, Mason Archer, and Lulu Milnes | News Editor, Sports Editor, and Staff Writer



Blueprint Photo/Mara Korzeniowska

As the Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccines progress through their distribution processes, skepticism surrounding the effects of the vaccines remains prevalent.

However, the vaccines have proven to be very effective and a positive indicator that life may return to normal in the coming months. With this incredibly high effectiveness of the two vaccines, a return to a hybrid-learning model is looking increasingly viable as Contra Costa County continues to administer vaccines.

While California struggles to obtain a sufficient supply of vaccine doses, individuals across the state are rushing to get the vaccine, creating long lines at distribution sites.

Although many eagerly wait to get the vaccine, some, however, remain wary due to the possibility of unknown long-term effects. While both the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines have undergone careful testing and in-depth trials to ensure their efficacy, the uncertainties surround-

ing the vaccines create reluctance for some.

“Both vaccines are FDA approved, which means they’ve gone through a very rigorous review process. The hesitations that might be there for someone to get a vaccine, that I think are valid concerns, are about long term effects,” Biotechnology teacher Sydney Johnson said. “We don’t know what happens over a three or a five or a ten year period.”

After the FDA issued emergency use authorization to Pfizer’s vaccine on Dec. 11 and Moder-

na’s vaccine on Dec. 18, states across the country quickly scrambled to order as many vaccines as possible. However, as vaccine manufacturers struggled to initially reach their targets, nearly every state continues to fall behind in their administration processes.

Currently, out of the state’s 40 million residents, California has only administered 1.5 million vaccine doses. Being the most populous state, California ranks second in the country among vaccines administered. However, California faces one of the worst vaccination backlog crises in the country having over 1.9 million doses yet to be distributed.

Locally, a collaboration between Lamorinda Village, Comprehensive Wellness, and volunteers resulted in a two-day vaccination program held at Stanley Middle School in downtown Lafayette. Over the course of the event, healthcare volunteers administered roughly 500 doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine to Lamorinda residents.

“We started out just trying to obtain some doses of the vaccine from the county for our practice. And very quickly, we realized there was a huge need in the community,” event organizer Dr. Denise Hilliard said.

With such a successful result, the groups hope to hold similar events in the future once they receive more vaccines from the county.

“We are currently expecting additional doses from the county. So we can hopefully roll out similar, drive-thru clinics over the next couple of weeks,” Dr. Hilliard said.

The vaccination sites in the Contra Costa area remain ongoing and will hopefully begin administering the vaccine to a wider group in the near future.

Although the vaccine is not yet available to all local teachers and students, as distribution ramps up, the likelihood of teachers receiving the vaccine soon is looking increasingly promising.

“We hear from county health that it could be as early as the end of this month,” Superintendent Dr. John Nickerson said. “We’re hopeful that all staff members will get at least their first shot in the month of February, but that’s hopeful with a degree of optimism.”

While teachers are likely to receive the vaccine soon, there is still a long way to go before students, age 16 and above, will be able to get the vaccine.

“When it becomes available to students, kids 16 and older will be part of phase two. Students will be encouraged to [receive the vaccine], but it would take legislative action to make that a requirement for public schools in California,” Nickerson said.

Despite the lack of any mandate requiring students to receive the vaccine in order to return to school, many hope to get the vaccine as soon as possible.

“I do not have any hesitations [taking the vaccine] because I feel like I am healthy and I want to return to normal life,” junior Noah Bloch said.

Despite the global vaccination effort, a return to in-person learning remains in the distant future as COVID-19 cases continue to soar throughout the state.

“Reliable sources are saying getting back to normal by summer might be a long shot right now with the new variants,” Nickerson said. “We are starting conversations about what it would look like if we had to open next school year in hybrid, which would be unfortunate and something none of us would ever have imagined in March when we started down this road.”



# Freshmen Attend In-Person Study Groups for Winter Finals

*Teachers work with the class of 2024 on campus to prepare them for finals*

Griffin Ruebner and Erin Hambidge  
| Staff Writers

Balancing the workload of finals week, the accompanying stress, and the unrelenting anxiety can be incredibly challenging for students, especially given this year's distance learning environment. Freshmen, who took their first set of finals last semester, were hit hardest by the encroaching exams.

To help combat freshman-year struggles, the Acalanes administration and staff organized a five-day period, from Dec. 8 to Dec. 12, in which first-year students that wanted help could attend in-person study groups led by their teachers.

The subjects that held sessions were World History, math, English, French, Spanish, and physical education. Teachers hosted their groups in their individual classrooms or in the library.

The school took safety precautions very seriously to ensure the health and well-being of staff and students.

"Before students even arrived, there was an expectation communicated to the students about how the session would go... campus safety included arrows on the sidewalks, directional arrows, hand sanitizer, a plastic shield at my desk, and a line drawn in the classroom on the carpet that states where the teacher's area is... I felt really safe," Spanish teacher Heidi Skvarna said.

Freshmen who had questions or felt uncertain about their final could get the answers they needed from their teachers during the preparation sessions.

"I chose to do it because a lot of my teachers were recommending it and I thought it would just be an easy thing for me to do to get prepared," freshman Jacqueline Kuhner said.

The groups provided students with guidelines for finals and illustrated how best to get ready for the tests.

"I think [the study groups] helped quite a



Blueprint Photo/Emma Uffelman

lot because my teacher gave me a study guide, which I needed because I was studying blindly before that," freshman Megan Yee said.

A combination of peer tutors and leadership students volunteered to help out at the sessions, providing the freshman with academic and emotional guidance going into their first exams.

"It was so amazing to watch two seniors lead freshmen through a math review both for the knowledge they provided but also the mentorship. I just loved it!" Leadership teacher Katherine Walton said.

The experience fostered a sense of Acalanes community previously lacking in the current online environment.

"Transitioning to high school can already be really hard and I can't imagine what it's during online school. I think the in-person study sessions made it easier for the freshman because they were able to connect with older students and learn new study tricks and ask questions about finals," senior Carly Arends said.

Teachers took full advantage of the rare face-to-face learning time to address students' individual concerns and questions. The smaller

conversations soon fostered a more active discussion that every student participated in.

"I left a lot of time open for questions about what students wanted to review, and that was great because it kind of spurred on other people's questions because you could see the light bulbs going off," Skvarna said.

Students that attended the study-groups believed it positively impacted their performance on their finals.

"I went to my Spanish class study session. One of my parts of my final was the week before, so I didn't get to study for that with her, but for the written test I think I did better because of [the study session]" freshman Gabriel Gardner said.

While these study sessions may pale in comparison to those held in years past, many believed the sense of community and connectedness they fostered between student and teacher was invaluable.

"Connection is the first thing that comes to mind; both a connection to one another but also to campus. For some ninth-graders, this was the first time in a classroom which I think is huge," Walton said.



# Homo Sapiens Vs. Canis Latrans: The Ultimate Battle of Population Control

*As local coyote attacks on residents and pets grow, so do calls for stricter wildlife methods*

Julia Poole and Sabrina Agazzi |  
Online Feature Editor and Copy Editor

As locals deal with dazed deer, rowdy raccoons, and ferocious, feral pigs, residents must welcome a new member to the Wildlife Gang: the courageous coyote.

Coyote sightings are common in the Briones Hills, but the increase in coyote ventures to human-populated areas is a new occurrence.

The most recent series of attacks began on July 9 when a coyote bit a small child at the Moraga Commons Park. The coyote struck again around 6:30 AM on Dec. 4 during Moraga Resident Kenji Sytz's morning workout at the Campolindo High School football field.

"I went down to do some push-ups and I felt a sting that turned into an intense sharp pain. My initial reaction was that one of my friends behind me was doing something to my leg, but I turned and, in a push-up position, I looked back and there was a coyote latched onto my left calf," Sytz said. "I tried to shake my left leg, and he didn't come loose. I had to punch it with my left fist before [the coyote] released from my leg."

As an avid backpacker, Sytz is no stranger to wildlife. Sytz believes this particular coyote's behavior was abnormal.

"I've encountered a lot of animals; bears, moose, all different things. When animals, especially coyotes, see a human, they typically back off," Sytz said. "This coyote didn't run away. It stood its ground. We had to yell at it and wave our arms for several seconds before it retreated".

The coyote's behavior also shocked many Acalanes students.

"I was surprised because I never thought coyotes were that bold. The ones I see usually keep their distance or run away," senior Jasmine Toni said.

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) investigated whether the coyote incidents were related. The CDFW took DNA samples from the July 9 and Dec. 4 attacks and confirmed that they came from the same coyote.



Courtesy Photo/Peter Caprio

While some were eager to blame the entire coyote population, Sytz points out that it may just be one crazy coyote.

"During the week of my incident and the confirming that they were connected, I had so many people tell me things like 'I don't even want to take my trash out' or 'I hate coyotes' or 'There are too many coyotes in this area now, it's like the turkeys, we need to get rid of them.' One coyote out there is being irregular from normal coyote behavior, and we shouldn't hate coyotes because of this one," Sytz said.

The attacks come as a shock to most locals, but one Acalanes student believes history holds the answers.

"The populations of herbivores were controlled and kept in balance by a large suite of predators like the famous California brown bear and cougars. When European settlers arrived, they were unable to coexist with these animals and set about hunting the brown bear, wolf, and cougar to near extinction," senior Peter Caprio said, "Coyotes were able to spread across the US because of the lack of competition with larger animals and a lack of predation by humans."

Although coyotes did not threaten humans in the 1800s, human-coyote conflicts are increasing in large part to humans expanding into coyotes' natural habitats.

"Our expansion into other territories, such as building new houses over parks and open land space, will have an effect on the coyote population. As humans remove more and more resources with expansion, there is less and less to go around for the animals to share. This makes the interspecies and intraspecies competition much

worse," science teacher Thomas McNamara said.

Another possible explanation for the coyote's odd behavior is that coyotes are losing their fear of humans.

"Coyotes are usually fearful and cautious around people — though as urban habitats grow and people are becoming more indifferent to their presence, some coyotes are becoming habituated to people and losing their natural and beneficial fear of them," McNamara said.

Just when residents believed the wildlife antics were over, the coyote struck again by biting a Diablo Foods employee on Dec. 15.

"I work at Diablo Foods. The coyote attacked one of our produce guys and bit him in the leg. My manager had to fight it off with an umbrella. I think it's crazy. I had never heard of coyotes attacking humans before," senior Andrew Cusumano said.

While some residents believe it truly is just one crazy coyote, others believe there are more to come.

"That one coyote is really just the beginning. Perhaps, that was the 'bravest' or 'alpha male' of a group - checking out the situation for the rest of the group - but my guess is that the coyote problem will get worse in the next few years," McNamara said.

Many are pushing for the county to resolve the issue as soon as possible. Some students offer possible solutions after weighing both ethical and environmental concerns.

"Some [national parks] have a three-strike system where every time a specific animal attacks a person, that animal is transported to a separate area, and after that happens three times the animal is put down. Hunting down all the coyotes would solve the problem of attacks, but it would seriously destabilize local ecosystems to remove a top predator, so we should try to avoid that," junior Katrina Ortman said.

As coyote attacks increase, many residents want to prepare. In the event of a coyote attack, McNamara recommends that one should run towards the coyote, make noise, and try to look as large and scary as possible. Perhaps most importantly, McNamara suggests ways to hinder the habituation of coyotes to humans.

"Don't become indifferent... if you see a coyote in your yard or neighborhood always haze them away. Do so completely, and remind your neighbors of the importance of doing the same," McNamara said.



# Shrida's Systems: Changes in Distance Learning

*When the school district moves to its hybrid instructional model, those remaining in distance will have vastly different experiences*

Shrida Pandey | Online News Editor

As the Acalanes Union High School District (AUHSD) slowly approaches the start of hybrid learning, Acalanes High School students prepare for two different systems. While some Dons will go to in-person classes, others will remain online.

Acalanes students continuing distance learning when the AUHSD hybrid program begins will start a new learning system different than the beginning of the school year.

In the current distance learning system, students attend classes during the week on a block schedule composed of 75 minute periods, with an asynchronous Monday. Students attend periods one, two, three, and seven on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and attend the rest of their periods, four, five, and six, on Wednesdays and Fridays. Teachers also offer two optional Academy periods on Wednesday and Fridays alongside a Cohort Academy, a mandatory homeroom, on Mondays.

The new distance learning system will start when the AUHSD transitions into hybrid learning and will split the students remaining at home into two Cohorts, AC and BC.

AC Cohort students will live stream into their classrooms on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and participate in remote instruction on Wednesdays and Fridays. BC Cohort students will follow an opposite schedule, attending synchronous live stream sessions on Wednesdays and Fridays, after asynchronous instruction on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Instead of Academy periods, the new schedule gives students in distance learning an extended period of lunch due to hybrid learning needing two lunch periods for students to remain socially distant.

The removal of the Academy period for those in distance learning worried some students.

"Academy really helped for me to talk to my teachers, get help on assignments, and have a

place to work. It is disappointing that students who are in distance learning won't have the support that those in hybrid learning will have," junior Sylvia Deng said.

Mondays will remain the same, with students required to attend Cohort Academy before participating in remote instruction. Students in distance learning, however, will also have three optional support sessions to make up for the loss of Academy. During these times, students can attend teacher office hours.

"Distance learning when the hybrid model starts will be more difficult since we won't be seeing teachers like we do right now, so I appreciate the school offering flexible teacher office hours for those having to stay at home," senior Madison Payne said.

Even with the addition of teacher office hours, some students struggled with retaining a high academic performance in distance learning. In the first quarter, more students received letter grades of "D" and "F" than any other year. The new complexity of students live streaming into class and those in attendance concerned some parents.

I think it will be harder for teachers to manage live streaming their class and also teaching students in hybrid at the same time. Some subjects

will definitely be more difficult to teach than others. Hopefully, they will be able to get help," parent Janet Chan said.

Still, students struggling in online classes can receive support through Peer Tutoring, which will remain online during the return to hybrid to continue helping students.

"Students struggling in distance learning when school resumes in hybrid will still have Peer Tutoring to help them. We are open Monday through Fridays and have tutors for a variety of subjects," junior Stella Bobrowsky said.

Students also have the ability to request a switch to their learning model one week into hybrid learning.

"The district offering us the ability to change our model is really nice because if we decide a certain style doesn't work for us, we will possibly be able to change it," junior Tessa Chan said.

As the country continues to administer COVID-19 vaccines, many community members hope distance learning will be temporary as things return to normal.

"I think that distance learning is the safest option for school right now. However, hopefully, in the future, enough people will be vaccinated where we can go back to how things were before," junior Caroline Crossland said.



Blueprint Photo/Mara Korzeniowska



# College Board Updates Met with Mixed Reactions

*With changing college admission processes, the College Board decides to adjust*

Stella Heo and Erin Hambidge | Online Editor-in-Chief and Staff Writer

For years, many students and parents disapproved of the College Board providing standardized tests that colleges used as measures of students' capabilities. In response to COVID-19 and the growing criticism, the organization updated the types of tests it will distribute.

The College Board announced on Tuesday, Jan. 19 that it will no longer offer SAT Subject Tests and the SAT with Essay due to changing college admissions processes.

The organization cited wanting to reduce demands on students as the reason for discontinuing SAT Subject Tests immediately and pointed out that Advanced Placement (AP) classes sufficiently showed proficiency in different subjects. The College Board also stated that colleges can understand a student's academic performance through their SAT scores, transcripts, and course selections.

The decision relieved many students because they would not need to prepare for as many standardized tests on the same subjects.

"I feel relieved that the Subject Tests are gone

because that means I don't have to study for different versions of the same test this year... Now I have more time to focus on doing great on one test instead of doing okay on two," junior Katrina Ortman said.

Students who did not know if they should take the tests found the decision stress-relieving.

"I haven't started really researching whether or not I should take Subject Tests depending on where I'm considering to go, and so the College Board removing them all together makes my college research and college prep less stressful," junior Autumn Long said.

Students critical of the decision pointed out that there will be more weight on AP classes.

"The SAT Subject Tests being canceled makes things a lot more stressful. I was planning on applying to schools out of [the] country, and most of them require both AP exams and SAT Subjects Tests to apply. Now, there is so much more weight on scores from AP exams, not just for schools in the [United Kingdom], but everywhere," junior Mia Jaenike said.

In addition to canceling all SAT Subject Tests, the College Board will no longer offer SAT with Essay after June. The essay, once grouped with the writing segment of the test, became optional after many people criticized its formulaic approach to writing.

Students supportive of the decision emphasized that the SAT would be less tiresome without the

essay.

"Doing a timed essay after hours of an SAT was absolutely painful emotionally and physically. My hand cramped up and it wasn't worth it, so I'm glad nobody else has to go through it," junior Lauren Yee said.

However, students critical of the decision pointed out that some students might have relied on the essay to potentially reinforce poor math or critical reading scores.

"The essay being discontinued might not be a good thing because it means there is more riding on a smaller portion of the test, which isn't great if you aren't a comfortable test taker. It also means there's less room for error because there is no essay to support your performance if you score poorly on the multiple-choice section," junior Sammy Hess said.

The College Board is also looking into creating a digital version of the SAT and will give more updates in the spring.

Many students supported the idea of a digital SAT because it may lower possible COVID-19 transmissions.

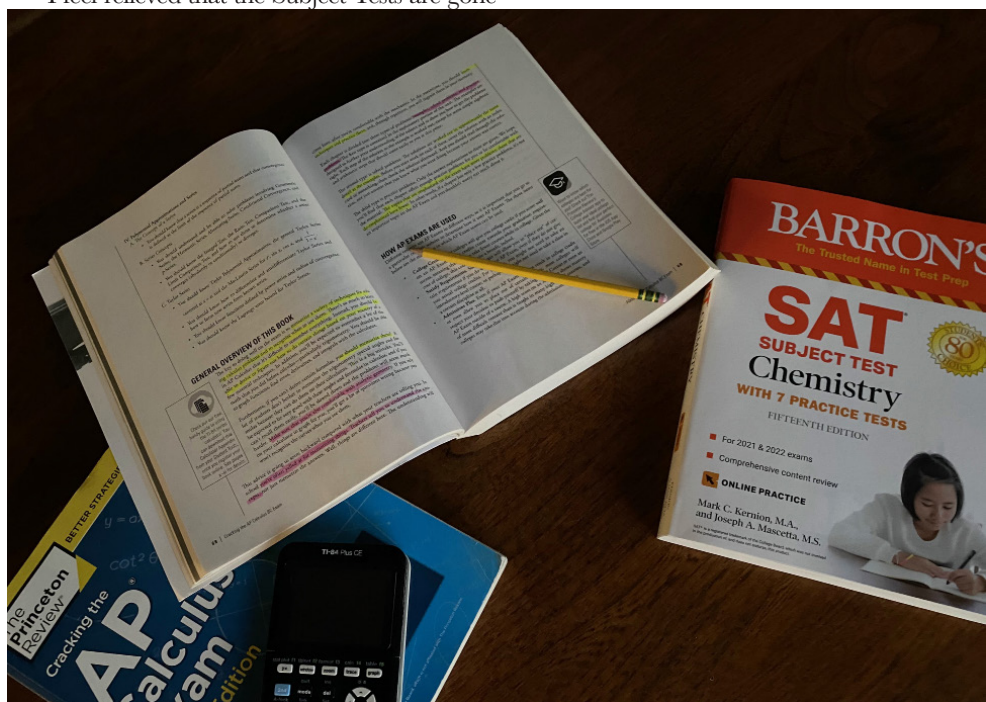
"The pandemic has definitely reshaped our school system, and while things may be returning to normal soon, I believe it's necessary for students to have the option to take the SAT online. COVID-19 has made it very hard for students to take it, so it will give them the opportunity to take the exam while staying safe," junior Katherine Montoya said.

Some students liked the idea but emphasized that the digital version may have its flaws, such as students cheating, if students take the test at home.

"I think it's a great option though I'm not sure how they're going to regulate cheating. I just think it will be a huge disparity in scores and most students will opt for the digital version," Jaenike said.

Overall, many students are happy with the changes and see them as a step forward in showing colleges a student's various skills that aren't highlighted in standardized tests.

"This is another step in not requiring simple test scores and instead of having more holistic evaluations," Long said. "For both myself and many others, sometimes students just have a bad day. If that bad day happens to be on the one day of the year they signed up for a test, that could make it or break it for college, [and] I think that's an incorrect evaluation of the student's capabilities."



Blueprint Photo/Liam McGlynn



# Mock Trial Adapts to a Digital Landscape

*Through thick and thin, the Mock trial team endures in the face of the pandemic*

Alex Ariker and August Walker |  
Copy Editor and Staff Writer

“We need those documents, Remy. Really need them. You need to get into that house tomorrow—”

The evidence is interrupted as the attorney’s audio cuts out suddenly, prompting a sigh from coach Joseph Schottland.

This is a common sight in the Mock Trial world, where practices and competitions have moved online. The Acalanes team continues to work in preparation for upcoming competitions, adapting quickly to challenges posed by the new digital setting.

Mock Trial is an academic club led by history teacher Joseph Schottland with the help of former judge Harlan Grossman and family law attorney Michael Carter. Under their guidance, students in the club split into prosecution and defense teams, working to prepare a prosecution and defense for a fictional case.

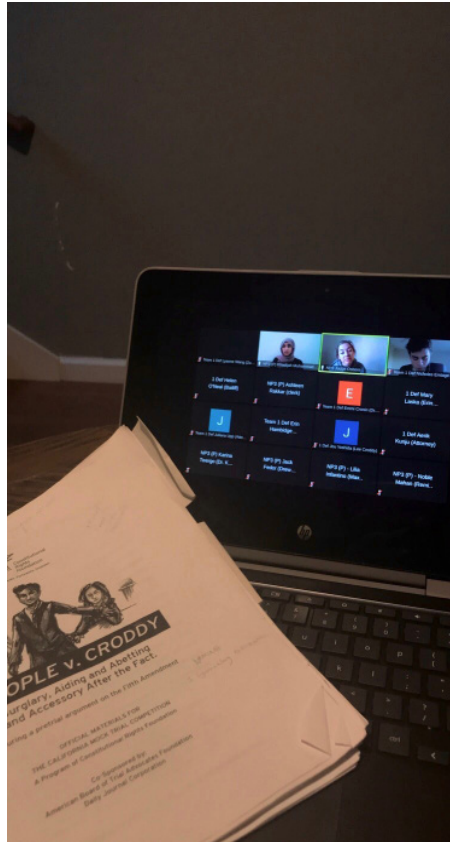
The Acalanes prosecution and defense are pitted against the defense and prosecution of other Mock Trial teams in an attempt to win the Mock court case.

During the three hour trial - the formal competition - student attorneys cross-examine other student witnesses attempting to discredit the validity of another witness or point at weaknesses in the opposing argument.

To succeed at winning the competition, students must have various social, speaking, and writing skills. The Trial itself consists of multiple scripted readings and impromptu speeches, making Mock Trial a combination of theater and debate.

“As an attorney, there are a lot of improvisational skills, a lot of thinking on your feet, because the other attorneys are allowed to object and you have to argue that back and forth,” senior and attorney Megan Baginski said.

This year’s case is *The People V. Croddy*.



Blueprint Photo/Lyanne Wang

The defendant is a political journalist and influencer who allegedly instructed one of her supporters, Remi Montoya, to break into a house to steal government documents. Croddy is being charged with aiding and abetting a first-degree burglary and accessory after the fact to the same first-degree burglary.

“The argument is that because Croddy told Montoya to get the documents she is responsible for the instigation of the crime. A lot of the argument has to do with how clear Croddy’s words were and whether or not what she said was enough to suffer consequences,” senior and witness Eli Hamalian said. The second charge, “accessory after the fact, was because Lee Croddy held Remi Montoya at her house after the crime was committed, so there is a dispute of whether Lee Croddy was aware that a crime was committed.”

Although not all Mock Trial cases are realistic, some of the students think that this case is, relating the messages between Croddy and Montoya to President Trump’s recent tweets

and the ensuing storming of the Capitol on Jan 6.

“In our current political climate, this case is not outlandish. Rather, it’s very possible given the current American situation,” sophomore and pretrial attorney Hanniel Dunn said.

In addition to regular preparation for the case, this year’s Mock Trial team also adapted to the quarantine. Aside from the first few practices when there was no stay-at-home order in Lafayette, practices and formal competitions have both moved online. These changes have both pros and cons.

Instead of meeting in person at a courthouse, in front of a practicing judge, and dressed thoroughly for the occasion, students now participate in trials from home, interacting with their computer. Some students find it harder to convey their beliefs or arguments when they cannot use their body language or hand movements like they could in the past because of the limited view of them that zoom displays.

“So much of mock trial is just trying to connect with the judge and the scorers, really making them feel and understand your point, and it’s kind of harder to do that when you’re just talking to a screen,” Baginski said.

Although online practices are more efficient than practicing in-person, the new Zoom landscape changed the team bonding and personal aspect of Mock Trial for some students.

“[Now] there is a very different team dynamic [over Zoom],” Hamalian said. “That is the biggest thing that I miss; not being able to be in the same room and make jokes, or eat snacks together and talk about whatever was going on before practice.”

The Acalanes Mock Trial team is also set apart from other Mock Trial teams because it is a club and not a class. Although this might immediately be perceived as a hindrance because of the lack of class time to work on cases and motivation from grades, the optional participation in the club actually propels the team’s success further.

“Everyone who is involved with [Mock Trial] actually wants to be involved. It’s not for a grade, It’s what you put into it. Anyone who is involved is involved because they generally want to be a part of this club,” Hamalian said.



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A person with long dark hair, wearing a white t-shirt and dark pants, is sitting on a grey floor. They are looking into a large, white-framed mirror that reflects their image. The person's face is partially obscured by their hair and the mirror's reflection. The background is a plain, light-colored wall. The overall mood is contemplative and somber.

# *PIECING TOGETHER THE BROKEN REFLECTION*

**BY JAMIE LATTIN  
AND BINTI SOHN**

Warning: This story contains mention of disordered eating, self-harm, and suicide. The writers use the attribution Anonymous Acalanes Student for sources who wish to maintain anonymity.





*We often think of mirrors as bright surfaces— they reflect light, after all. We’ve learned to trust the gleaming images they send back to us as accurate and reliable.*

*But mirrors have a dark side.*

*An old Roman legend tells that shattering a mirror will lead to seven years of bad luck. In the Victorian era, people began covering mirrors after a death to prevent the spirit of the deceased from being trapped. And for centuries, children have huddled around mirrors in the dark trying to summon Bloody Mary.*

*We aren’t children anymore. We may no longer believe in trapped souls or otherworldly portals over our bathroom sinks, but new monsters sometimes appear in the reflective surfaces, ones that follow us even after we tear our eyes away.*

We have a tendency to berate, detest, and attempt to alter the image we see in the mirror. Over time, this repeated self-criticism can spiral into dangerous and disordered habits.

Eating disorders account for some of the world’s deadliest psychiatric disorders. According to a meta-analysis of 36 studies on the mortality rates of eating disorders, anorexia nervosa increases the risk of death by 5.86-fold, bulimia nervosa by almost 1.93-fold, and other unspecified eating disorders increase the risk of death by 1.92-fold.

Despite common and often exclusive recognition of anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa, the American Psychiatric Association’s Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) recognizes a vast range of other common eating disorders such as avoidant/restrictive food intake disorder, binge eating disorder (BED), pica, and rumination disorder. Individuals may exhibit traits of multiple specific disorders and often grapple with a unique mixture of disordered habits.

“BED is the most common eating disorder in the United States,” National Eating Disorder Association (NEDA) Communications Manager Chelsea Kronengold said. “However, it is often less talked about than anorexia or bulimia. One reason is that BED is one of the newest eating disorders formally recognized in the latest edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual. Before the most recent revision in 2013, BED was listed as a subtype of OSFED, or Other Specified Feeding or Eating Disorder.”

While the aforementioned disorders are all enumerated in the fifth edition DSM, the list is far from exhaustive. The medical community has begun to consider the possibility of other disorders such as orthorexia, an obsessive form of healthy eating, which is currently unrecognized by the DSM.

“Without formal diagnostic criteria, it’s difficult to get an estimate on precisely how many people have orthorexia, and whether it’s a stand-alone eating disorder, a type of existing eating disorders like anorexia, or a form of obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD),” Kronengold said.

BALANCE Eating Disorder Treatment Center, a nationally recognized treatment center located in New York City, treats clients who present symptoms outside of DSM-enumerated disorders.

“We see eating disorders as being part of a broad spectrum ranging from mild disordered eating to acute eating disordered behavioral syndromes. Not every person fits into a defined diagnostic ‘box,’ as symptoms overlap and often shift. There are a number of clients we evaluate who have an orthorexic presentation without manifesting pronounced eating disorder symptoms that fit a classical DSM diagnosis. This might include obsessive thinking about ‘clean eating’, compulsive exercise, a persistent ‘diet mentality’, food rituals and rigidity around food and exercise,” Clinical Outreach Coordinator for BALANCE Treatment Center Leslie Davenport said.

Although genetics and a few medical conditions, including Type-1 Di-



abetes and Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome, can predispose individuals to disordered eating, psychological and social factors are often major contributors. This diverse range of causes makes it impossible to judge whether or not someone has an eating disorder from outward appearance alone.

“You cannot tell if a person has an eating disorder based on their age, race, gender, socioeconomic status, or even weight. Any person in any sized body can have any eating disorder,” Kronengold said. “Misconceptions about who eating disorders affect have real consequences, leading to fewer diagnoses, treatment options, and pathways to help for those who don’t fit the stereotype.”

Stress, pressure, or change can contribute to the onset of an eating disorder.

“It started freshman year, with the transition to high school and taking on a new sport, cross country. There was also family stuff going on at the time, and stress to fit in which worsened it. I felt that everyone around me was naturally able to be so skinny and that by not eating I would be able to ‘fit in,’” Anonymous Acalanes Student One said.

Eating disorders often accompany other mental health issues, such as depression, anxiety, OCD, and ADHD, leading to additional challenges in daily life.

“Stress and psychological distress can have a major impact and particularly if there has been conflict in the family, early childhood trauma, and relational discord. Anxiety and depression are major contributing factors to an eating disorder as are chronic feelings of low self-esteem or inadequacy,” Davenport said.

Davenport, who is also a licensed clinical social worker and trained psychotherapist, noted that eating disorders can quickly become coping mechanisms.

“The attempt to use food and to control one’s eating in order to cope with feelings and emotions becomes the mode of operation for dealing with stress and unhappiness. For some, dieting, bingeing, purging and other behaviors may begin as a way to manage painful emotions and to gain a sense of stability and control over one’s life. Eventually the solution to feeling a sense of control becomes the very problem itself as the eating disorder takes over and wreaks havoc causing damage to the person’s physical and emotional health,” Davenport said.

This can create significant difficulties for students dealing with multiple issues.

“I have severe ADHD so I wasn’t really able to pay attention before I got medicated,” senior Jack Page said. “Mix that with anorexia and all your energy is taken away, making it hard to focus and making me always distracted.”

Eating disorders accompanied by other mental health issues are considered co-occurring conditions.

“It is rare that an eating disorder exists as a distinct diagnostic entity without being accompanied by another mental health condition. Eating disorders have a high comorbidity rate with other mental health and substance use disorders,” Davenport said. “Anxiety and depression can be co-occurring conditions at a rate as high as 70-80 percent and substance use can be found to co-occur at a rate of between 25-50 percent. In addition, many persons struggling with eating disorders have some experience of trauma in their histories. Trauma can occur at a rate of 50-80 percent, which is pretty staggering in terms of numbers.”

These issues may quickly create a vicious cycle.

“It might be self harm. It might be really heavy thoughts about





themselves. And it might be thoughts of suicide,” Wellness Coordinator Allen Choi, who has also worked as a social worker and therapist, said.

Although staff members like Choi work to support students, there is a limit to how much they can help in the realm of eating disorders.

“If I see that there is a longer term problem that requires addressing, if I’m not the right person, it’s really working with them to maybe work with their parents and work with [an] outside provider,” Choi said.

Acalanes Human and Social Development (HSD) classes, however, hope to provide information and start more conversations about body image in a school setting.

“There are a lot of misunderstandings about bodies, dysmorphia, anorexia, bulimia, and all eating disorders and body image issues in general. I think that people don’t understand that it is a real mental health issue,” HSD teacher Monika Voellm said. “The person who is experiencing these feelings doesn’t necessarily want to be ‘right,’ but that they are suffering a mental health crisis.”

One major misunderstanding when it comes to eating disorders is their prevalence amongst males.

“Historically, eating disorders among men have been stigmatized. Therefore, boys and men suffering from eating disorders have been overlooked and have ‘flown under the radar’ so to speak, for quite some time. Until recently, boys and men were either under diagnosed or not diagnosed at all. Therefore, when they do present for treatment their eating disorders are sometimes more advanced and at higher levels of acuity,” Davenport said.

Similarly, Davenport noted a high prevalence of disordered eating among nonbinary and transgender individuals.

“The Journal of Adolescent Health sampled nearly 300,000 U.S. college students about their self-reported eating disorder behaviors. The researchers found that 15 percent of the transgender people surveyed reported an eating disorder diagnosis within the year prior to the survey. Transgender



students self-reported higher rates of an eating disorder diagnosis as well as higher rates of using compensatory behaviors such as diet pills, vomiting, and laxatives,” Davenport said.

According to NEDA, eating disorders are accompanied by a slew of damaging physical and mental effects, including digestive, cardiovascular, neurological, and endocrinological issues.

“I would have to get to the point of thinking I was gonna fall down or that I was going to have to rush somewhere to think, ‘okay, now I’ll eat’. And then I would eat and for like a split second I’d realize it gave me energy pretty quick,” Page said. “But then I’d go on the scale. And then I’d be peeved by the weight the food gave me really quick too, even though that’s not real weight.”

The physical consequences of disordered eating can also distract from academic performance.

“There were many times during tests that I was scared the entire class could hear my stomach growling because it was so loud to me and the room was so silent,” Anonymous Acalanes Student Three said.

Eating disorders, which can spread to rule a person’s every action or thought, also take a drastic toll on mental health.

“If I drank a cup of water or took a five minute walk I immediately had to go see the number on the scale,” Page said.

Obsessive behaviors like this tie into feelings of guilt or shame associated with food.

“I also grew up in a pretty controlling household when it came to food, so I don’t think that helped. My family keeps unhealthy food in a separate spot so that we can keep track of the rate at which it gets consumed... I don’t really blame them, it did make me aware of healthy eating, but I also now have a serious guilt complex when it comes to



eating out of schedule or eating something that isn't on the menu," Anonymous Acalanes Student Two said.

Davenport emphasizes the importance of the household in the development and treatment of eating disorders.

"The family system can be influential and serve to enhance one's chances of developing an eating disorder. If the family places a strong emphasis on external beauty, achievement and success as the primary means to be loved and accepted this can have an influence on an individual developing an eating disorder," Davenport said.

The home isn't the only place where issues take root. Body image issues may develop in a school setting as well. Senior Riley Hawkins recalls beginning to feel self conscious in second grade.

"I thought I wasn't as skinny as the other girls," Hawkins said.

Although unhealthy comparisons should not burden childhood, children often begin to dwell on their appearances at young ages, especially if they encounter teasing or bullying.

"The first time I became self conscious of my body was probably in fourth or fifth grade when girls started really comparing themselves to each other and dressing differently based on their body types. This made me think that you had to look a certain way to wear certain clothes," junior Natalie Cohen said.

Many young women feel pressure to be slim while still having curves, an often impossible standard. Boys can also face hurtful comments and toxic expectations from an early age.

"If we're born in a society that tells us that we have to look a certain way -- it could be race, gender, body size -- and we don't fit that mold, there's a lot that we have to overcome in addition to all the other facets of our lives," Choi said.

The competitive nature of sports sometimes largely influences body image by creating additional molds.



"Weight was just always thrown out there and compared," Page said. "If I beat someone in a race or something, they might still say, 'Oh, well, you're still bigger than me.'"

When every athlete is wearing the same uniform, comparison is inevitable. Tight or revealing uniforms often exacerbate this.

"Wearing skin tight spandex was not my favorite," Anonymous Acalanes Student Two said. "All I could think about was what my thighs and waist looked like."

The tendency to compare oneself to others is seldom healthy, especially due to natural genetic variation. Social media, unfortunately, makes these comparisons and expectations commonplace.

"I think that guys should know that the things they see on social media of perfect girls are unrealistic, and we can't possibly look like that. I know that a lot of guys think that skinny girls on social media work out perfectly, and eat super healthy and that everyone else just must not care about health. I just want them to know that only praising girls with 'perfect' bodies creates such an impossible, toxic standard," Cohen said.

Social media often revolves around models, celebrities, fitness influencers, and other prominent figures. The ever-growing platforms that promote their content also create space for people to criticize others' bodies. This can push people to seek "better" figures in order to avoid similar criticism.

"Society constantly makes comments about what they look like, how their body appears. If they've gained weight, if they've lost weight. When somebody becomes famous, it's like they're no longer humans," Voellm said. "That creates a culture of people expected to look perfect and the minute that somebody thinks they don't look perfect anymore





then it's open game to just make fun of them.”

According to Davenport, the rise of social media directly correlates with the rise of teenagers receiving treatment.

“We have definitely seen an increase in the number of teens coming into treatment and we are seeing a striking number of younger teens or pre-teens as young as 12 presenting with serious eating disorder symptomatology. There seems to be a high correlation with social media which has only increased during the pandemic with many young people isolated at home in front of computer screens for the majority of the day,” Davenport said.

Social media also gives a platform to people who may promote disordered habits.

“In social media we often see a romanticisation of eating disorders and disordered eating behaviours. You have to be really careful who you follow because many people actually promote disordered eating and label it as a ‘lifestyle’ or ‘fitness journey,’” Instagram blogger @agoooddaytogrow said.

Accounts like @agoooddaytogrow attempt to counter this with positive content. Dutch blogger Dionysia, who runs the pro-recovery Instagram account @idontneedana, also uses her platform to educate and encourage.

“By sharing my point of view...on harmful content on social media, I try to stimulate people to listen to their own bodies instead of the things society teaches us. I also gather recommendations, like videos, other helpful accounts or YouTube channels, for people to educate and inspire themselves. By setting up challenges, I try to motivate others to challenge their fear foods, which I always join as well,” Dionysia said.

Many bloggers and influencers also work to bring light to tangential social issues.

“I like to use my social media to share my own story as well as to educate others on the dangers of ED’s and the toxic traits, such as fatphobia and racism, that come into play as well,” @agoooddaytogrow said.

@agoooddaytogrow also uses her account to inspire dialogue around topics like stigma and other challenges that people in recovery face.

“I hope that my online presence has helped to destigmatize mental illness and eating disorders and show that you can’t tell who has an eating disorder simply by looking at them. I also want to show everyone that it’s possible to recover without having access to top quality resources and that recovery truly is for everyone,” she said.

Recovery often consists of a five step process, according to the NEDA. This process, which starts with the acknowledgment of the issue, requires significant time, support, and patience.

BALANCE applies a variety of treatment approaches that follow a similar track.





“There are many treatment approaches and strategies such as Family Based Therapy (FBT), Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), Exposure and Response Therapy (ERP) and so on,” Davenport said.

As it's often difficult for individuals to acknowledge their disordered habits, outside influences often spur on the recovery process. At Acalanes, the Wellness Center occasionally plays a role in this step.

“One of my goals is to actually work with [students] and help them identify, ‘Hey, this is time for you to make a change, and maybe get some outside help,’” Choi said.

Eating disorder recovery varies greatly on an individual basis.

“One treatment modality may be successful for one client but prove ineffective for another. There is no ‘one size fits all’ when it comes to eating disorder treatment. Most often a combination of treatment approaches and techniques tailored to the individual client’s needs is shown to be most effective. At our treatment center each client has a specific customized plan and we are always seeking to integrate new forms of therapy based on the latest research in our field,” Davenport said.

The admin of @agoooddaytogrow emphasizes this variation.

“Every individual’s recovery looks different! Everyone has different factors that come into play. Are they able to access treatment? Do they have a support system? Are fatphobia and racism coming into play? Everyone is going to have different lived experiences and no two individuals are going to have the same recovery process,” she said.

The length of recovery also varies from person to person.

“Treatment takes time and often clients and families falsely believe that one is simply ‘cured’ once weight is restored. This is only the first step as it takes time for the brain to return to full functioning and for the body to restore itself to maximum health. In addition, ingrained and entrenched behaviors need to change. Some reports of anorexic clients that have fully recovered indicate that it can take up to seven years or longer to get well and to establish stability in recovery,” Davenport said.

Access to recovery is often inconsistent across ethnic and racial lines as well. A 2003 study by the National Eating Disorders Screening Program found that doctors are less likely to ask people of color about eating disorder symptoms than their white peers despite similar rates of symptoms.

Although recovery is a difficult process, it can allow one to cultivate new interests. Dionysia found motivation to create her Instagram account while in recovery herself.





“In the beginning of my recovery, I wasn’t allowed to do anything. I couldn’t go to school, I couldn’t hang out with friends, I couldn’t even go for a walk. I needed a new hobby, something I’d be passionate about,” Dionysia said.

“Meanwhile, I was very motivated to recover, and so I decided to share my tips and experiences with those who are struggling with the same things as I do. I’ve always loved helping others and I wanted to create a safe space that would give people the feeling they’re not alone.”

During this process, the everyday support of family and friends as well as trained professionals is essential.

“When we eat together I try to take the first bite, have a larger portion than them, and keep eating long enough that they’re never the last or only person eating. If we’re eating from a package sometimes I’ll position it so the nutrition label is pointed away from them,” senior Megan Baginski said.

Supporting friends, even through minor actions, can alleviate the stress of eating.

“Even if we’re just going into a gas station and I see they’re not getting something I’ll be like, ‘Hey, I can get you something, what do you want?’” Page said. “It’s better than always telling someone ‘you have to eat.’ That’s insensitive.”

This support is especially vital in the case of relapses, which are common.

“Relapses are common and are a reality that one must confront in the process of recovery. Relapses often occur if a patient does not have an adequate support system and if treatment is not comprehensive or extensive enough. Treatment must be high quality delivered by trained, experienced eating disorder professionals and the level of care must be carefully chosen to address the degree of acuity of a given patient’s condition. Some patients relapse in outpatient care because they have not had the opportunity to receive extensive treatment including proper weight restoration and re-nourishing that can take place in an inpatient or residential setting,” Davenport said.

Relapse, much like the initial development of an eating disorder, can be the result of myriad factors.

“There can be many ‘triggers’ to increase one’s chances of relapse. These can include an unsupportive home environment, especially if parents or other figures are manifesting their own eating disorder behaviors, stress, trauma, co-occurring conditions such as depression, anxiety or substance use, and finally vulnerability to the influences of advertising and social media,” Davenport said.

These triggers can even be offhand comments, which Voellm recommends avoiding by redirecting language.

“Commenting about people’s bodies, like their size when they’ve lost weight, can cause more harm than people might realize,” Voellm said. “A better comment might be along the lines of, ‘that’s a cool shirt you have on.’”

When trying to improve their body image, some students take a stance of gratitude.

“I sometimes think of the people out there who are limited in what they can do because of a medical problem, like some people can’t walk and I’m over here complaining about my body even though I’m capable of so many things. An ounce of fat on my stomach isn’t going to restrict me from doing anything,” Cohen said.

Many also encourage setting goals and focusing on the future.

“Find out what motivates you. Think about your goals and your purpose in life. Keep reminding yourself of these things and believe in yourself. You’re capable of achieving amazing things. Recovery is so possible and you’re so much stronger than you think you are,” Dionysia said.

“Whatever you’re struggling with, your struggles matter and you deserve the help and support you need to get back your life. It’s so worth fighting for. And you don’t have to fight alone.”

It is also beneficial to remember the negative consequences of disordered eating while struggling with body image issues.

“When I begin to have more of the eating disorder thoughts again, I tend to try to remember what it was like when I let them win. It was a very unhappy and taxing state, both mentally and physically,” Anonymous Acalanes Student Three said.

To increase awareness, it is vital to discuss and reduce stigma around eating disorders.

“You shouldn’t feel like you’re a bad person because it affected you. When we take away the shame, the stigma, more people will get help,” Voellm said.

*It can be difficult to know where to turn when you find yourself standing amidst broken glass. Remember that you are not consigned to cleaning it up alone.*

*It may take time, and we may get cut along the way.*

*But piece by piece and shard by shard we put our reflections back together. We regard that illusion of self that stares back at us.*

*And we let it go.*





# Food To Your Door: A New Delivery Culture

*Food delivery services become one of the few booming industries amid the pandemic*

Helen O'Neal, Sammy Lee, Michael Balmat | Staff Writers

Imagine sitting on your couch, watching TV in your pajamas, while ordering food to your front door with the push of a button. It's quick, easy, and most importantly, it is safe during the pandemic. This has become common for many families as the pandemic continues to plague America.

As COVID numbers continue to rise, the demand for food delivery services around the country has increased. According to Marketwatch, UberEats, GrubHub, DoorDash, and Postmates, have doubled their combined revenue during the pandemic.

Due to stay-at-home orders, Lamorinda has also been a part of this increasing demand for delivery services.

"There has been an increase of 30 percent or more monthly delivery service orders since March 2020," Vitality Bowls owner and Operations Manager Gabi Lazar said.

Both during and prior to the pandemic, most people use food delivery services to save time.

"If you have a busy life, you may not have the ten minutes to go to a restaurant and have to order something. But if you order in, you can sit at your computer and use those ten minutes to do work that you have to do, and your food will come to you," sophomore Joy Baker said.

Amid the pandemic, though, many customers utilize delivery services to avoid going to public spaces to prevent contracting the coronavirus.

"[Food delivery services] are convenient with COVID and people not wanting to go out because you don't contact as many people," Baker said.

Food delivery employees also claim to feel safe from exposure to the coronavirus as well.

"[We] just pick food up and leave it on the customer's doorstep without contacting anyone," Acalanes Class of 2020 alumni and DoorDash Driver Marcelo Guerra said.

With customers reluctant to leave their houses, deliveries have helped restaurants stay in business.

"[Being able to deliver] allows us to keep our doors open, and every source of additional income is crucial for us at this time to oper-



Blueprint Graphic / Mara Korzeniewska

ate and helps to keep more jobs," Lazar said. "We understand the importance of delivery during this time."

Due to these increasing delivery demands, many local restaurants expanded their delivery service options by using corporate delivery services like Grubhub, DoorDash, and UberEats.

"Bonehead's has always had the option of online ordering. But with the pandemic, we started using Grubhub and DoorDash because there has been such a demand for take out/delivery," Assistant Manager of Bonehead's Texas BBQ in Lafayette, Ana Garcia, said. "I think [the increasing demand is] due to people just not wanting to leave their house."

The high demand has also created many jobs for the community. The job's flexibility and safety allows busy high school and college students to join the industry.

"I play a lot of soccer and workout daily, so I usually don't have time to be working at a regular job. DoorDash is a great side job to have because it is flexible... you pick when you want to work," Guerra said.

However, some people avoid using food delivery services because of concerns that local restaurants lose money.

"The problem with the food delivery services, like Doordash, is that they take a cut of the profit that the restaurants make," English teacher Cathy Challacombe said. "Even if I were to take out, I would go and pick it up

myself because I'd rather that money go to the restaurant workers and their families."

Businesses claim that community support plays a large role in the survival of restaurants during the pandemic.

"We've seen such amazing support from our community during this pandemic. The community has kept us in business and allowed us to keep all of our employees working during this troubling time," Garcia said.

Community members also express concern for the quality of the food delivered by corporations like GrubHub or UberEats.

"A lot of the stores that deliver are chains and I don't tend to like chains," Challacombe said. "Also, for something like Doordash, you're waiting 20 minutes. I know when I go to a restaurant, and I'm waiting to pick it up, I am going to get it fresher."

Similarly, some people view food deliveries as unnecessary and pick up the food themselves because restaurants regulate their health and safety measures to lower risks.

"When we get takeout, [we] go and pick it up. For takeout, if you only get a few things, it is a lot of extra money for not that much risk of getting the virus. A lot of the takeout places have made it easier to pick up. You do not really have to even go into the store for more than 5 seconds," junior Kyra Ariker said.

Alongside delivery services, many families use delivery services for their groceries as well.

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“I use the Safeway and Costco delivery apps. It makes it easy to get your groceries delivered when you need them without having to risk your exposure to COVID,” sophomore Drake Debiasse said.

However, similar to meal deliveries, some people are also concerned about the quality of their delivered groceries.

“When [I go grocery shopping], I go through definitely four packs of blueberries before I figure out which one I want to buy. If I am choosing, I’m very precise, and it’s not like ‘oh, they all need to be perfect.’ but if it is your food, you are more inclined to look at it, and if you are getting raspberries, none of them are squashed,” Baker said.

Some customers note that grocery shopping is a personalized task and that workers don’t always deliver the desired groceries.

“My family likes a lot of organic stuff, and we can only have certain specialized milks due to lactose intolerance issues. You can [specify what products you want online], but the people who pick it up don’t always know where to find the alternatives, or they don’t know what the best alternative is,” Ariker said.

Despite the many benefits, some families do not believe that they will continue the grocery delivery services beyond the pandemic.

“My family probably will not do it that much outside of covid. Now [delivery services are] kind of necessary [in order] to not get COVID, but once we are past that to where it is more manageable, we will probably go ourselves because it is kind of expensive for a more Monday task,” Ariker said.



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# Generation Z's Rising Interest in Spirituality

*Teenagers join the growing spiritual community through social media and personal awareness*

Lyanne Wang and Connor Faust |  
Staff Writers



Blueprint Cartoon / Freschttta Warres

What is the meaning of life? Is there a higher power? Since the dawn of civilization, the search for purpose has drawn many to the beliefs of religion and spirituality. While both are still in practice, a recent interest in spiritual topics such as meditation and quantum theory, particularly manifestation, has led to a specific uprise in spirituality within the Acalanes community.

Prompted by the combination of quarantine and social media, spirituality has taken a strong hold on Generation Z, becoming a prominent belief system for many.

Some people use the terms religion and spirituality interchangeably, but they are two different concepts. Religion concerns an institutionalized system of faith, and worship of a god or gods, whereas modern spirituality focuses more on one's personal connection to a cosmic world beyond the physical existence.

"I think religion is based more around rules and how to live your life, while spirituality is more about finding your own path in living based off of what keeps you happy and connects you to your higher self which

is different for every person," junior Clea Hansen said.

However, despite its general definition, spirituality may fill a different role to each person due to its principles of personal interpretation.

"Spirituality is a very loose term that we often use when speaking of that non-physical aspect of life," Reverend Jeff Anderson of the Oakland Center for Spiritual Living said. "Spirituality is a state of mind and a way of living that incorporates an awareness that there is more to life, to living, more to creation than meets the eye. There is the physical universe and then there is that which is non-physical."

As a whole, religion takes a greater focus on the externals such as houses of worship, books of scripture, and rituals that impact individuals' exterior lives. On the other hand, spirituality commonly leans inward towards one's awareness of their own soul and their journey to a higher self.

"To me, spirituality is a curiosity of one's own mind and the way that it interacts with the rest of the world... Spirituality is about knowing thyself, hailing thyself, and taking in-

tropection upon yourself," sophomore Skylar Thomas said.

Due to its self-derivative nature, some practitioners find that spiritual practices are not as restrictive as traditional religious practices, giving them more freedom in how they connect with spiritual ideas. Common practices such as meditation, yoga, and contemplation help to lead individuals on a path of self-discovery.

"I practice spirituality [through] meditation, manifestation, crystal healing, shadow work, tarot readings, just a lot of different things... I really enjoy that it's very nonjudgmental and there's no set rules or ways to [go about it]. I also enjoy that it helped me find my gender identity and pronouns I'm comfortable with," sophomore Aura Riegel said.

For some practitioners, creating personal routines as opposed to following those of an organized religion can make spirituality more intimate. Whether it be meditating or going on daily hikes, such practices that allow individuals to connect with themselves can sometimes improve a person's mental health.

"With the tools that I've learned through spirituality, like meditation, the visualizations help you [to] process traumas and understand your own feelings. [That] is incredibly useful to me and it's really helped me through some rough stuff," Thomas said. "Spirituality is a huge part of the way that I process the world and how I process my own feelings... It can be a really guiding force of comfort."

Despite the recent attraction amongst teenagers, spiritual practices are not bound to an audience of a certain age, race, or even religious belief. Some people discover spirituality later in life and develop a strong connection to it.

"I didn't learn about yoga and meditation until I was an adult... [Now], I enjoy the peace and clarity that spirituality brings to me. I feel more grounded, calm, and generally happier when I am regularly meditating and feel connected to myself, my spirit, and Spirit. It helps me immensely in my day to day life," Spanish teacher Gretchen Schwab said.

With the new interest in spirituality in younger generations, some creators use online platforms such as Youtube or TikTok to



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teach and share spiritual content. Along with meditation apps such as Headspace, social media created a new interface for younger audiences to connect with spirituality and its community.

"I saw a video on YouTube called witchcraft Q&A... So I watched that first video and I watched more from [the] channel and more and more, and I started learning and then I worked up to picking up [spirituality]," Thomas said. "The online community of spiritualists has helped my learning journey a lot."

However, these online forums sometimes act as a double-edged sword and provide low-quality content that lacks depth or supplies misinformation.

"I will say though, I'm not a particular fan of the online spiritual community because I feel like a lot of [the information] gets watered down. Specifically, I have a vendetta against 'witch tok', the community of witchcraft on TikTok. I feel like a lot of the information is secondhand spew, spewed and believed without skepticism," Thomas said.

Due to the long history of spirituality, practices and concepts from several different cultures have come to influence many of today's spiritual ideas. For example, *moshka*, a goal in Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism to detach oneself from the feelings and perceptions that ties one to the world, is a main concept in spirituality.

"Spiritualist practices are drawn from all around the world. You can find roots of modern spiritualism in eastern esotericism, specifically Buddhism, but a lot in Hinduism as well.... I would not say just Buddhism, you've got things from all over the world. You have teachings from Northern Europe, specifically, the Celts, Nordic peoples, Germanic pagans," Thomas said.

Despite the disparities between religion and spirituality, the two belief systems overlap with some principles, given their long history of existence in the world. Religion holds a similar purpose to spirituality in giving followers both a sense of community and hope.

"Religion provides individuals and communities at once a social structure, a value, a moral structure, and a purpose. Most importantly, I believe faith provides people with something to believe outside of the temporary time we spend alive," history teacher Ed Seelenbacher said.

While they share ideals surrounding purpose, people often clump religion and spirituality together. But as religion and spirituality are two separate belief systems, people do not

need to practice both to practice one.

"To me, spirituality can be completely atheistic. You do not have to believe in a God to be a spiritualist. The idea that occultism requires a belief in a god is false because, in occultism, you are the power [and] you are the vessel," Thomas said.

Still, it is common to partake in both religion and spirituality by applying certain concepts of one with the other. People sometimes form a stronger connection to one or both of the belief systems by combining the often intertwining ideas within them.

"I think that spirituality is a part of religion [and] our connection to the higher power... Even though I don't believe in every aspect of the Catholic Church, I still enjoy connecting to my spirituality through the Catholic Church because I grew up attending mass [and] I feel like I can connect to God and Spirit when I'm inside a church or cathedral," Schwab said. "To me, the religion part is just how we practice our spirituality."

Some people choose to draw concepts from religion as well as spirituality, and believe in a greater being but not a specific God.

"I do believe in some sort of divine energy,

but I don't really think I believe in a God... I think there's a sense of godliness and divine within everyone and I guess that aligns with some with certain Christian beliefs... but I am not a Christian," Thomas said.

Throughout the many variants, spirituality and religion hold one thing central; belief.

"The power of belief is definitely huge because it's your own personal power, your own school of thought to believe in a God, and that can inherently be spiritual," Thomas said.

The path of spirituality and discovering oneself does not happen overnight. Some students say that although spirituality is a demanding process, it has the ability to improve individuals' lives starting from within.

"It's not easy. I'm not saying it will be, because [spirituality] is a path of self-discovery and self acknowledgment, and if you aren't ready to acknowledge your full self, both the good and the bad, it might not be for you. But, there is deep wisdom that you can gain through learning about yourself and questioning everything around you," Thomas said.





# The Evolution of Bedroom Pop: Changes in 2020 Artist Culture

*Amid the pandemic, artists change the music industry by adapting points of inspiration*

Zoe Edelman, Aisha Mohanty, and Nastia Grits | Head Graphics and Staff Writers

Producing music from one's bedroom is no new feat. With music platforms like Spotify and Soundcloud, becoming an independent artist is now more accessible than ever. However, during 2020 and the stay-at-home orders, the rising genre of bedroom pop took on a more literal meaning. Rather than recording in elaborate recording studios and fancy equipment, artists of all levels modify their creative processes within the confines of their bedroom walls.

Stemming from small lo-fi beats to current unique melodies, the evolution of bedroom pop continues. People recognize the new genre for its melodramatic, beat driven tracks. Bedroom pop is a nonstop musical revolution that has grown into a multi-million dollar genre.

Most bedroom pop artists note that authenticity is essential to their success. Songs with lower production value can compensate with quality lyrics, and the indie-music community often regards them highly. Listeners reach for personal connections with each musician they look to, which bedroom pop artists offer.

World renowned bedroom pop artist Clairo reached millions through her song, Flaming Hot Cheetos. The song has emotional lyrics used to unite listeners, rather than commonly recycled clichés that often centers around heartbreak, friendship, and loss.

From distinguished bedroom pop artists to small rising musicians, individuals develop their niche crafts in the comfort of their own bedrooms or home studios. Musical resources lay at the fingertips of any aspiring artist, utilizing programs such as Garageband and Logic X Pro.

Best known for his singles Friendzone and Maple Syrup Tears, 20-year-old Chicago-based alternative indie artist Huron John discusses the logistics of bedroom pop.

"There is no better time to learn how to become like a DIY musician. And right now you can go on YouTube, you can learn how to use any program. The best time to do

anything is right now," John said.

Junior Sean McFarlane agrees with John's sentiments that with today's current climate, it is a perfect time to experiment with music and veer away from familiar comfort zones.

"Something that's kind of very practical sounding and a little less intellectual or esoteric is that I've started using a lot of electronic stuff in my keyboard for example, which is very different than what you would have seen me doing a year ago," McFarlane said.

Ella Jane, a 19-year-old artist from New York whose song for her senior year AP Literature class went viral, thrived off this formula.

"I think that there is a large push away right now from kind of a really contrived and calculated sound. People now more than ever really seek sincerity from the artist that they want to listen to instead of like a pop star thing," Jane said.

Senior Max Simas, also recognizes his self-improvement over the past year by developing a musical brand that matches his visions rather than what the modern day music industry deems ideal.

"This past year I became more confident in my ideas and put more and more of my soul into my music. What you hear is the most 'me' that my music has ever been, so it feels amazing when somebody likes a song; it's like that part of me is getting a thumbs up of sorts," Simas said.

As Jane said, the movement away from calculated lyricism and into emotional literacy acts as a nuance to the pop scene. Focusing on more common melancholy experiences is common. The song Shampoo Bottles by Peach Pit is a perfect example of this, with lyrics like "I've been leaving your shampoo bottles/Over in the corner there/Sitting empty on the bathtub rail/Wishing they could wash your hair." The universal experience, in this case remnants of an ex conveyed through niche lyrics, is what bedroom pop capitalizes on.

"When I started recording, I tried to write from other perspectives or telling it more like a story. When I was younger, I used to write a lot of stories and that felt sort of like it felt

familiar because I hadn't done that in a while. I think sometimes it can be really nice trying to find truth in someone else's narrative," Jane said.

Despite some artists experiencing a positive flow of inspiration, other artists feel the opposite. With many days blending together and limited social interaction, people lack new stimulants for inspiration.

"For some reason there's some disconnect between, having an idea and going and recording it, which I hope returns after I'm thrown back into the actual world, because that's kind of my creative bread and butter is just making thousands of random, unique pieces of music even if it's terrible," McFarlane said.

Pinpointing emotions can be challenging, but inspiration can be found in the simplest places. Layla Eden, who's best known as the artist Awfultune and for her popular single I Met Sarah in the Bathroom, takes inspiration from other creators.

"I often just read one of my favorite books or listen to my favorite music. I think listening to music is really inspiring for me personally and that's how I get out of those creative blocks," Eden said.

*Continued on 22*



Blueprint Graphic / Zoe Edelman



*Continued from 21*

Bedroom pop creates the opportunity for artists to thin the boundary between different genres.

"New music always challenges current standards. I feel like people tend to be leaning more towards the noise type music, more bass and discordant chords and heavy voice distortion. I think people want ways to express their feelings, and the current times seem almost angry, and music can express that," sophomore Amelia Gong said.

The accomplishments of bedroom pop artists in 2020 prove incredible, producing sensational songs amidst a pandemic and many other physical and emotional roadblocks. Bedroom pop is a genre compatible with everyone, and it is only beginning to claim its spot on mainstream radio and global charts.

"I've been both very beat down and depressed by 2020, but I've also been very inspired and motivated by it, and now kind of like turning that frustration and sadness in the world currently and trying to turn it into something positive," John said.



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# Students and Teachers Reflect on Cohort Experience

*After the first semester of weekly cohorts, students and teachers share their varying opinions on its effectiveness*

Zach Snyder and Brendan Connelly | Staff Writers

The abrupt need for a new system of online learning left a demand for new elements of school, specifically Academy Cohort. Academy Cohort, similar to a home-room class, is a newly designed class with a goal of promoting inclusivity and equity, creating a comforting community during COVID-19.

Every Monday, students and teachers attend a Zoom meeting beginning at 9:00 a.m.. Cohorts of about 20 students discuss racial equity, equality, and managing COVID-19. After the first semester, students and staff recognize the importance of these cohorts as well as the difficulties associated with these discussions.

A student's cohort teacher is one of their teachers for another subject. This teacher is commonly their fourth-period teacher, but this varies, as not all teachers teach this period. Cohort classes began at the start of the school year with racial equity and equality conversations in hopes to educate students and promote more inclusivity throughout the school.

"In my opinion, the most relevant topic we covered was about racism and discrimination and how it shows up. In the past year, there have been so many instances of clear racism and hateful speech that have spread around our community, and I think that cohort has created a way for everyone to take part in learning about racism, which is a super important first step," junior Emily Starn said.

These weekly meetings often begin with a short lecture from a cohort teacher, covering a new concept that students later explore through dialogue. The topics vary from intersectionality to microaggressions, teaching mindful inquiry to address such issues.

"I believe the most interesting topic we have discussed was the topic of intersectionality. I feel that what we learned in this lesson gave us a more accurate portrayal of discrimination in society and how different types of discrimination can pile on individuals and change their experience with each type of

discrimination," Starn said. "This is a conversation that relates to everyone because of its unique effect on each person. Being able to learn about how different parts of your identity fit together was really interesting and a much-needed lesson."

Along with exploring racial consciousness, students have a space to talk about distance learning. Especially at the beginning of the school year with the Black Lives Matter movement and the sixth month of COVID-19, Acalanes strived to ensure each student was emotionally settled for virtual learning and provided with the needed support. To meet these goals, Acalanes hired Keith Hawkins, a motivational speaker, to inspire students to stay engaged.

"I was so interested in the motivational cohorts we had that were accompanied by messages from Keith Hawkins. I love being inspired. I feel like everyday I try to seek out things that will encourage and motivate me, and the cohorts with Hawkins, as well as the inspirational videos that he made for our school, were such a bonus," senior Lena Johnson said.

Student participation in these cohorts is quite varied. Many students see these cohorts necessary to address important topics, but for some, Zoom creates an environment where participating in a conversation can be difficult. With Zoom, it's very easy for

students to remain disengaged. Because of these challenges, teachers observe very little student involvement, resulting in more of a lecture-style class.

"It's just been a real challenge to develop any kind of connection that elicits more conversation. And so really, what ends up happening is I kind of primarily droning on," math teacher Misha Buchel said.

Students widely agree that it can be uncomfortable to speak on Zoom and much prefer to participate in smaller breakout rooms. Breakout rooms provide a space for students to learn from peers in a more intimate setting.

"In my cohort, there are usually a couple of brave students who will speak up in front of the whole class, but I would definitely say that I hear more from my peers when we are in smaller groups, like breakout rooms. Although the intimate breakout rooms can be a bit more uncomfortable, I have had a lot of meaningful and mindful one-on-one conversations with classmates whom I have never even met in person," Johnson said.

Student and teacher experiences in Cohort are generally positive but most note the constant difficulty of conversing and connecting over Zoom. However, students see the clear positive aspects and definitely look forward to discussing other topics during the second semester.

"What I hope to see more of is the application [of cohort topics]. We are still seeing so many blatantly racist actions happen in our schools so I think moving the focus toward how these lessons apply in real life would be beneficial," Starn said.



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# Fashion Forecast: Spring 2021 Predictions

## *Students share their opinions on upcoming fashion trends*

Juliana Upp, Haley Rurka, Izzy Smith | Staff Writers

Although 2021 assails us daily with explosive news stories, the media is not the only aspect of society full of surprises. A new year brings new fashion trends, some repeated and some fresh.

“History repeats itself” is a saying that sometimes rings true for clothing and accessories. However, with every new year, contemporary trends push those rigid boundaries. Inspired by styles from the 1960s to the early 2000s, Spring 2021 fashion repeats many old fads, but with a modern twist.

### **Fuzzy Bucket Hats**

Bucket hats gained popularity in the 1980s, with various rappers such as LL Cool J sporting them frequently. While many consider the bucket hat to be a timeless accessory, in 2020 their popularity grew and many claim the trend will continue.

The fashion forecast predicts that different styles of bucket hats, such as hats made of fuzzy material will be highly sought after.

**Resin Rings**  
In 2021, the streets and runways will supply us with resin rings, the newest jewelry fad. In contrast to many of 2020’s jewelry trends, which consist of minimalistic accessories, resin rings add pops of color to any outfit. The rings are translucent, so they allow for light to reflect through them. This fun and quirky jewelry style is the perfect way to spice up an outfit.

### **Kitten Heels**

Another trend that will dominate 2021 is the kitten heel. This heel was a staple in any fashionista’s closet during the early 50s and 60s. During the early 2000s, the trend resurfaced and many celebrities, such as actress Paris Hilton, regularly wore this shoe. Throughout the 2010s, platform heels held a spotlight. This Spring, however, will note the return of smaller, dainty heels. Repeatedly worn on the red carpet by musicians and actors alike, kitten heels are the perfect shoe to dress up or dress down.

### **Platform Boots**

We saw Doc Martens become an iconic shoe,

popularized by Emma Chamberlain, in late 2018 and are still worn today, but now we’re transitioning to the chunky platform boot in 2021.

Platform shoes gained popularity in places like Europe and the UK in the 1930s and 1950s, the trend eventually migrating to the US. The iconic thick soles became a disco staple in the 1970s and shoes reminiscent of those intense shoes remain in style today.

In 2021, platform boots ranging from black and white to crazy patterns, most with chunky rubber lug soles, will come into style. Platform boots are such a staple in everyone’s closet and can be worn with almost any outfit.

### **Fringe**

Keeping with the 60s and 70s fashion trends, we predict that fringe clothing will come full circle in 2021.

The iconic flapper dress from the 1920s to the suede fringe jackets from the 1960s and 70s, fringe clothing in 2021 will take inspiration from both. Though this trend will be sticking to some traditional fringe, the upcoming year will expand fringe to cardigans and blazers. Expect to see your favorite fashion icons wearing this trend in all sorts of ways.

### **Sparkly Pants**

The sparkly pant trend originated in the 1990s, where things sparkled for no reason (although it could be argued that everything has a reason to be blingy.) Kendall Jenner marked the return of these pants when she donned them in an all green ensemble last year. This style has no parameters on color, so sparkly pants are a great vehicle to be flashy and flamboyant while still on trend.

### **Pastels**

As we mark the end of a neon era, pastels will make their way into the 2021 catalogues. Each Spring



Blueprint Photo/Haley Rurka

typically marks an increase in pastel colors, but this wave is here to stay. The same colors once loved in blazing hues will be toned down and emerge in pastel shades. Fashion influencers will mix and match pastel greens, pinks, blues and purples. This color palette has already begun to grow, and it’s popularity will skyrocket in the spring season.

### **Crochet**

It’s not for grandmas anymore! Popularized on secondhand shopping apps like Depop, this style is commonly seen in tops and cardigans. Beyoncé often wore crochet in the 2000s, making crochet “cool” again. In between then and now, crochet was generally regarded as a style for old ladies, but today, it’s back and better than ever. Crochet is especially interesting because it can be done at home with yarn and crochet hooks. Teens will have artistic license to create whatever they like using crochet, leaving lots of room to grow and be creative with this style.



# Yellow and Grey Make a Comeback as Pantone's Colors of the Year

*An analysis of 2021's colors of the year*

Jacque Peacock, Emma Uffelman, and Gabriella Gruber | Staff Writers

Despair hangs over a cold grey room on a Tuesday afternoon as a man walks in and notices the dullness surrounding him. He turns on a bright yellow light, and happiness springs from the bulb. He smiles as the room fills with warmth and delight.

On Dec. 9, Pantone released their colors of the year for 2021. They include a bright yellow “Illuminating,” and a dull grey, “Ultimate Grey.” Together, the colors communicate mood, emotion, and tone in various ways.

Founded in 1963, Pantone became the first prominent color matching system used by over 10 million designers worldwide. Pantone collaborates with companies for product development and brand identity.

Pantone's business website describes the company's purpose, stating, “The Pantone Color Institute provides customized color standards, brand identity and product color consulting as well as trend forecasting inclusive of Pantone Color of the Year, Fashion Runway Color Trend Reports, color psychology and more.”

In 2000, Pantone Color Institute created “Color of the Year” as a marketing concept for branding. Each year, the selected color influences product development in fashion, graphic design, and numerous other global trends.

Laurie Pressman, vice president of the Pantone Color Institute, explained her input on the considerable significance behind “Color of the Year.”

“It's a color that anticipates what's going to happen next,” Pressman said.

Many recognize the significance of Pantone's 2021 color choices, grey and yellow, as they prove successful when used to convey emotion.

“The combo of grey and yellow has been popular for many years, both in the world of interior design and graphic design. I feel they are nice choices for 2021 to represent the emotion of where we've been as a country and the hope of where we're headed,” MadPlum Creative founder Shannon Cahoon said.

In business, yellow and grey often collaborate in advertising and short term campaigns. Grey suggests power and control. Yellow, contrasting with the grey, portrays optimism and energy. Because neither represents trust or steadiness, businesses rarely use them in long term projects.

“Many of our clients are in business services need-



ing to portray trust, security, and professionalism. While the colors may be suited for short term campaigns and promotion, I don't feel they are beneficial for long term branding,” Cahoon said.

Grey and yellow also tend to contrast when used by authors in literature. The color's contradictions effectively contribute to a story as readers interpret their meanings through color theory.

“Color theory is essentially the color symbolism in literature that conveys the deeper meaning of texts. Authors select specific colors to add layers of meaning to their literature,” English teacher Erin Barth said.

An example of yellow and grey used together in literature could be a bright, yellow sun peeking through dreary grey rain clouds. A reader can use color theory to conclude that the sun represents happiness and energy succeeding in a spell of dullness and misery.

Color theory analyzes the shade of a color. Bright yellow represents hope and well-being, while other shades of yellow indicate different ideas.

“Yellow can also mean corruption and cowardice, but those are usually more muted - like the color of a white shirt yellowing as a result of age or decay,” Barth said.

The absence of color in grey reflects its meaning in literature. Authors use shades

Blueprint Graphic/Emma Uffelman

of grey to depict connotations of depression, illness, and loss.

Artists uniquely interpret Pantone's pairing as well. “Ultimate Grey,” the grey appearing in Pantone's selection, presents a confident tone rather than the overtly depressing one often observed in the literature.

“I feel like the grey they chose this year is safe and warm for a grey. It's also refined, which might be a diplomatic way to say it's not very youthful, lively or playful,” Stanley Middle School art teacher Robert Anke said.

No matter the literary, business, or artistic lens one might use to analyze the color's chemistry, their emotional story remains the same. It ignites the hope that despite hardships from the past year, better days draw near.

Pantone's declaration of the new year's colors on their website explains the importance of the color choice's harmony.

“A message of happiness supported by fortitude, the combination of PANTONE 17-5104 ‘Ultimate Gray’ [and] PANTONE 13-0647 ‘Illuminating’ is aspirational and gives us hope. We need to feel that everything is going to get brighter - this is essential to the human spirit,” their website states.

# Controversy Over a Man in a Dress: Harry Styles' Vogue Photoshoot

*Styles' gender nonconformity defies traditional masculine fashion standards*

Keith Johnson, Juliet Becker, and Irene Meklin | Head Videographer, and Staff Writers

In past decades, many celebrities chose to defy gender norms through fashion, whether it's prominent female politicians like Hillary Clinton choosing to wear suits or Queen dressing in drag for a music video. In these hundreds of instances, celebrities bend society's perception of gender.

While examples of gender nonconformity in mainstream media stem from as early as the 1980s, recent examples of celebrities spark dispute due to their outwardly controversial outfits.

Pop singer Harry Styles shocked thousands of readers when he wore a dress on the cover of *Vogue* magazine's December issue. This was controversial because he wore clothes deemed 'feminine' and became the first male cover model for *Vogue* since the magazine started in 1892.

Conservative political commentator Candace Owens instigated controversy in response to Styles' *Vogue* spread, tweeting that it "is an outright attack," and urging her followers to "bring back manly men".

This phrase was one of the most negatively received parts of Owens' tweet. She implies that wearing a dress or other feminine attire prevents someone from being masculine or manly. This raises the question of what truly makes someone manly and whether being a man requires "manliness."

The term "manly" refers to the standard society decides boys and men must express to be considered masculine, whether through emotion, clothes, or interests. For example, children often wear clothing and tote accessories that represent their birth-assigned genders. Pink usually indicates femininity, while blue contrasts with boyish connotations.

However, the term continues to change with rigid gender divisions, especially those formed on clothing becoming less important to new generations.

"I think the meaning of the terms is changing as people move towards the idea of gender identity as a social construct and breaking the rules of what is typically masculine or feminine," junior Paige Towery said.

In recent years, male expression of gender through style continues to evolve. Some men paint their nails, wear more jewelry, and even wear skirts comfortably.

Several years ago, this appeared taboo in many places. Although, some say in recent years that gender-nonconformity gradually faces broader acceptance.

"Honestly, I like when guys dress more feminine. I think they should be able to dress however they want, and I'm glad they can express their feminine side," sophomore Daphne Wandell said.

Gender identity, which is the gender that a person sees themselves as, is entirely separate from gender expression, how someone chooses to act or dress based on their gender.

While there are stereotypically masculine or feminine clothes, hobbies, and behaviors, there are no correct ways to act based on their gender identity.

Wearing more feminine or masculine clothing falls under the category of gender expression, not gender identity. The gender that Styles identifies with has nothing to do with the dress that he wears.

"I don't think [wearing feminine clothes] affects how manly they are," sophomore Luke

Brightbill said, "They wear what they want with confidence, and I think that makes them even more manly."

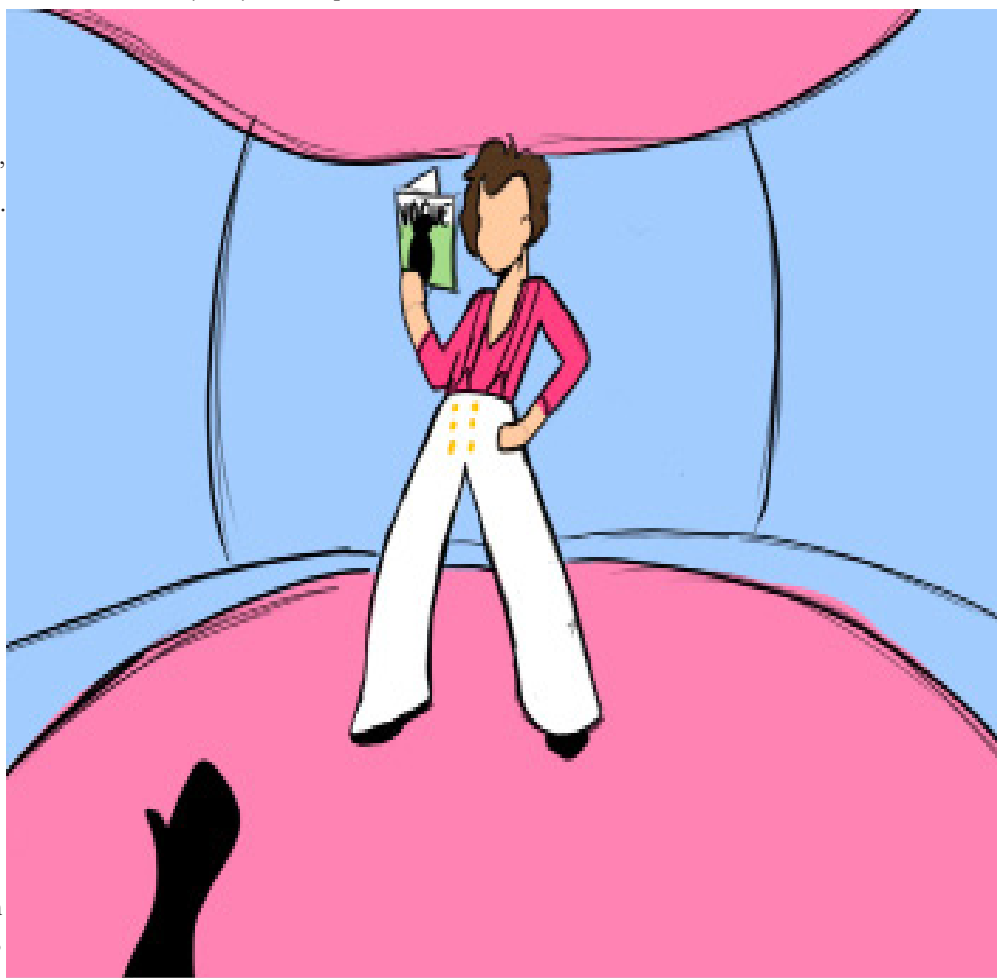
In the past, celebrities such as David Bowie, Kurt Cobain, and André 3000 championed dresses. Styles' *Vogue* cover, however, became a sensation of modern popular culture.

"Although he is definitely not the first to break gender norms like this, he has such a huge platform. Also, he was the first man to be on the cover of *Vogue* alone, so no matter what he wore, it would've been important," Towery said.

The debate over masculinity and femininity will continue to unfold as more people begin to accept others wearing clothing outside of their gender's stereotypical attire.

"I find that guys wearing feminine attire is fine. I see that breaking gender norms that were previously set is important," Brightbill said. "When it comes to clothes and accessories, it should all come down to personal preference."

Blueprint Graphic/Arlyne Noguera





# Unmasking MF DOOM: Your Favorite Rapper's Favorite Rapper

*Hip-hop legend Daniel Dumile dies at 49, but his legacy is far from forgotten*

Zack Lara | Staff Writer

Daniel Dumile, but most famously known by the alias, 'MF DOOM,' students and celebrities alike recognize as one of the most influential rap artists of all time. The mysterious 'illest villain' produced numerous celebrated works that changed the face of hip-hop -- but who was the man behind the mask?

For years, Dumile's work became lost in obscurity, but a new presence brewed within. A villainous anthem roared in his head, and an iron face emerged from the fiery ashes of Zev Love. Marvel's infamous anti-hero, Doctor Doom, inspired Dumile to redefine himself as DOOM.

The mask, inspired by the fictional character above, became Dumile's signature. Still, the figure behind the mask was unimportant to Dumile. He attacked the corporate notion that visuals sold sound. Dumile believed the message should prevail, not the character.

"It don't matter what I look like, it don't matter what the artist look like, it's more of what the artist sounds like," Dumile told the Red Bull Music Academy in 2011. "The mask rebels against [selling] the product as a human being."

Dumile proved that artists didn't need fame and appearance to be appreciated for their sound. He affirmed that "Anybody could wear the mask."

Nonetheless, the mask defined Dumile's public figure as much as it assumed symbolic weight.

Throughout his works, Dumile samples several quotes from the television show "The Fantastic Four (1994)," where Doctor Doom appears as a primary antagonist. He draws parallels between the fictional character and events in his own life and puts it in his songs.

Dumile primarily associated himself with Doctor Doom's tenacity. The villain always rose again after defeat, much like Dumile after losing his brother and the future of KMD. They also share a love for mad science: Doom with his evil inventions and Dumile with his experimental sound.

Dumile released his debut concoction, "Operation Doomsday" in 1999. The rejuvenated masked villain stormed back onto the hip-hop stage, assuming the role of producer and rhymers.

"[Dumile] was involved almost as much with the

beat as the lyrics themselves," junior Brahm Sasner said. "As a musician myself, I not only have a deep appreciation for the complex lyricism and rhythmically intricate flow of his works, but also the soulful samples he used in his songs."

Dumile famously pioneered sampling in hip-hop. Using sounds from other works was relatively unheard of at the time, and DOOM grasped the opportunity to make it his own. In his most renowned track, "Rap Snitch Knishes," Dumile raps over a guitar lick from David Matthew's "Space Odyssey."

Today, fans like Sasner recognize Dumile's incredible display of lyrical and DJ genius, but Dumile's debut faced mixed reactions. Many found it challenging to acknowledge the underlying musical mastery beneath the scattered and distorted instruments and rhymes present in "Operation: Doomsday."

"DOOM's raps are famously offbeat a lot of the time, but somehow he made it work," junior Tommy Hillman said. "The accompanying music follows his voice rather than the other way around."

Dumile's unfamiliar flow and sound drove away early listeners, explaining why fans did not widely recognize Dumile's early music. Dumile's inconsistencies, however, became widely celebrated as he rose in popularity.

"DOOM'S witty and offbeat rhymes are what really separates him from other rappers and is what I think makes his sound

unique," junior Sean Harrington said.

Regardless of early skepticism, Dumile's career soared in the early 2000s. His most renowned projects, "Madvillainy" and "Mm...Food," earned the masked artist widespread praise and recognition in the hip-hop community. His golden lyricism coupled with mastered record-spinning revolutionized 21st-century rap and music.

Tyler, the Creator, Childish Gambino, and many other artists popular amongst students cite Dumile as an essential inspiration in their works. Thus Dumile earned the title, "your favorite rapper's favorite rapper," and rightfully so.

Following Dumile's death, Radiohead's lead singer, Thom Yorke, tweeted, "[Dumile] was a massive inspiration to so many of us, changed things... For me, the way he put words was often shocking in its genius, using stream of consciousness in a way I'd never heard before."

Dumile spread the message of capability and creativity throughout his loyal following. To many people, including Acalanes students, he embodied everything an artist should be.

"I think the greatest thing any kind of musician can achieve is originality, and few were more original than MF DOOM," Sasner said. "He pioneered a style of hip-hop that would inspire many artists that would come after him."

Courtesy Graphic/Peter Kramer



# Evermore: Taylor Swift's Spectacular New Album

*Taylor Swift proves she really does “come back stronger than a 90s trend”*

Blueprint Photos/Mara Korzeniewska

Lizzy Xie, Sabrina Agazzi, Juliana Upp, and Nastia Grits | Managing Editor, Copy Editor, and Staff Writers

Put on a 19th century nightgown, light a candle, and grab some tissues. Taylor Swift once again delights fans with her new sister albums “Folklore” and “Evermore.” Whether it be engagement rings at the bottom of champagne glasses or benches on Coney Island, each of Swift’s songs tell an individual tale.

Released Dec. 11, the second of the two albums, “Evermore,” takes the listener on a journey through majestic woods, creatively exploring lost love, grief, social pressures, and more.

## champagne problems

This song is, in one word, astounding. Swift employs the idiom “champagne problems” (meaning a problem that others may see as desirable in comparison to a greater issue) to tell the story of two college sweethearts. This song remarkably details a proposal gone awry, illustrating a man on one knee with his mother’s ring and a main character who simply cannot accept. Swift tells the story of how beautifully their relationship began, alluding to King Midas to describe how they were golden and wonderful. The main character, however, struggles with her mental health, and this leads their relationship to come to a crashing halt. She declines his proposal as a result of instability and disconfidence in herself, and her problems are dismissed and belittled by everyone around her. She in turn creates another “champagne problem” for her partner, who only wants to marry her, but can’t. The disheartened man’s hurt is also invalidated, as he is told that he will find someone better and the woman he wants is “f---ed in the head.” A simple piano chord progression in the background contrasts with the complicated events in the song. Best lyric? “I dropped your hand while dancing / Left you out there standing crestfallen on the landing.”

## tolerate it

Ouch. This track hurts. As the listener, we do not actually experience what the main character of this song is going through, but it feels like it. This song is so gut wrenchingly sad. Listen, it’s one thing not to enjoy the things someone does for you, but merely



tolerating it? That hurts. So much. Think of it this way; you love and appreciate someone so much, you go out of your way to do nice things for them. Unfortunately, this person deems your actions as average and seemingly worthless that they don’t even bother to say they don’t like it. They just tolerate it and allow you to continue on while you have this idea that they appreciate it. Made writer Xie cry. Best lyric in this song? “I made you my temple, my mural, my sky / Now I’m begging for footnotes in the story of your life.” Let that simmer.

## no body, no crime (ft. HAIM)

Not only did we get country Taylor vibes with a little banjo moment, but we also got an entire murder mystery written in a song from Miss Swift! Murder, tire slashing, an affair, the list goes on. We would all like a Netflix series based on this song. Where did Este go? To slash tires? Where did she go after that? So many questions but so few answers. Best lyrics? “Good thing my daddy made me get a boating license when I was fifteen / And I’ve cleaned enough houses to know how to cover up a scene / Good thing Este’s sister’s gonna swear she was with me / Good thing his mistress took out a big life insurance policy.” So much power in those lyrics. She never says it explicitly, but we all know what happened to Este’s cheating husband. Once again, just simmer in those lyrics.

## marjorie

Swift pays a touching tribute to her grandmother, Marjorie Finlay, an aspiring musician of her time. A poignant expression of her ado-

ration, the first two verses of “marjorie” share Finlay’s advice and guidance given to Swift in her childhood. Although Finlay passed away in 2003, Swift asserts that she still believes her grandmother’s spirit is around her. Anyone who has lost a loved one can find comfort in this heartwarming idea that “what dies doesn’t stay dead.” And the bridge? Nothing less than devastating. Swift recounts stories of Finlay and regret for not getting to know her grandmother better. She further conveys that Finlay’s dreams of becoming a musician have been passed on to her. A true tear jerker, Swift’s tales and guilt evoke raw emotion and compassion. Finally, in the last verse, Finlay’s soprano is sampled as an accolade to her music career. The production is celestial and soft, celebrating the beautiful woman Marjorie Finlay once was. Best lyric? “I should have kept every grocery store receipt, ‘cause every scrap of you would be taken from me.”

## evermore (feat. Bon Iver)

This title track is the epitome of the album’s sad yet perfect, poetic aesthetic. It is a heart wrenching and all too real tale of depression. She feels trapped and drowning in her own thoughts. She tries to catch her breath but fails each time. Whatever she does, the pain continues yet she persists. She feels “barefoot in the wildest winter” with no way out of this misery. The first verse entangles the listener in the beauty of the song as Swift sings about “writing letters, addressed to the fire.”



# Students Weigh in on Controversial 2021 Grammy Award Nominations

*While the 2021 Grammys honor some of 2020's defining musicians, many fans critique the absence of their favorite artists*

Marisa Guerra Echeverria, Haley Rurka, and Lyanne Wang | Staff Writers

Amid the highs and lows of quarantine, many people find comfort in music whether it is through learning an instrument, writing a song, or listening to their favorite artists. This emphasis on music extends to musicians who released numerous groundbreaking records this past year inspired by current events. While the list of Grammy Awards' 2021 nominations paid tribute to these quarantine creatives, many fans felt jarred that the Awards disregarded prominent characters in the music industry.

Following the announcement of the Grammy nominations on Nov. 24, music enthusiasts at Acalanes along with figures within the musical community expressed renewed dissatisfaction with the Grammy Awards and brought many of the Awards' continuous controversies to light.

The Grammy Awards' voting process begins with record companies and Recording Academy members submitting songs and music videos they consider worthy of recognition into the Grammys screening process. After 350 experts in various fields review these entries, they organize them into appropriate fields. Then voting members composed of artists, producers, and songwriters proceed in the nominating process where each member may vote in up to 15 categories of genre fields to determine the five finalists of each category.

Although the Recording Academy aims to ensure that the Awards nomination process proceeds in a fair and ethical manner, some students feel that the Academy should provide the public with more information on who chooses the nominees and their reasoning behind it.

"I would say that the [voting group] needs to expand and include more people because I don't know who is included. There's also the transparency thing... [we should] see their thought process and learn who they are nomi-

nating and why," sophomore Joy Baker said.

Despite the common wish to understand exactly who determines the nominees and the consideration put into their judgements, some students acknowledge that increased transparency on this may only displease others.

"That kind of transparency definitely has value but would also add a level of complexity that might upset some unless it's by a uniform statistic, like the streams or sales for each nomination," junior George Rogers said. "I feel like everyone has their own justification and if the Recording Academy was more transparent, there could be just as many disagreements as if they weren't."

Nevertheless, the Grammys consistently feature many of the year's most prominent artists. Standouts of the 2021 nominations list include Beyoncé, Taylor Swift, Dua Lipa, and Roddy Ricch. Beyoncé leads this



Blueprint Graphic/Freschttta Warres

bunch at nine nominations while the other three artists trail at six nominations. Following these four artists are Megan Thee Stallion, Billie Eilish, DaBaby, Phoebe Bridgers, Justin Bieber, John Beasley, and David Frost, who all picked up four nominations. Notable first-time nominees include BTS, Harry Styles, and the Strokes.

Some students feel that this year's nominations successfully reflect the music people listened to.

"I am satisfied with the nominations this year. I feel like all the nominees are all representatives of music and their respective genres but also our diverse country and styles of music," junior Eli Pockell-Wilson said.

However, while the Grammy nominations highlighted some of 2020's eminent artists, some people believe that there was one album missing from the selection: The Weeknd's "After Hours." "After Hours" was one of the most popular albums of 2020 as it sold a record breaking number of 1.3 million album units. Its top songs "Blinding Lights" and "Heartless" even reached Number One status on the Billboard Top 100 list.

Still, despite going four times platinum, "After Hours" received no nominations for any category

within the 2021 Grammy Awards. Fans of the album and even The Weeknd himself took to social media to discuss the unfairness of the nomination process.

"The Grammy's remain corrupt. You owe me, my fans, and the [music] industry transparency," The Weeknd said in a Tweet.

Fans also shared their own opinions on the controversy surrounding the album's lack of nominations.

"The Weeknd absolutely should have been nominated for [his song] Blinding Lights. The song is great and broke streaming records. I think it should be the song of the year and I'm baffled it didn't get a nomination. His album 'After Hours' was great and deserved a nomination as well," sophomore Theo Stoll said.

The failure to nominate certain outstanding albums is not the only controversy the Grammy Awards confronted these past years. Previously, the Recording Academy faced backlash from many black artists, including Tyler, the Creator, who called out the racial insensitivity of the category name, "Best Urban Contemporary Album." The controversy surrounded how the term 'urban' became a catchall to group together BIPOC artists in a single category regardless of the music genre they create.

As a response, in June 2020, the Recording Academy renamed their "Best Urban Contemporary Album" category to "Best Progressive R&B Album" with hopes of promoting a more inclusive environment.

Despite this first step, many music-lovers felt disconcerted to see that the Recording Academy still applies the term 'urban' to sideline Latin artists to another category: their "Best Latin Pop or Urban Album".

"The [Recording Academy]...renamed their urban contemporary category to progressive R&B because...it kept some Black artists to a specific type of music by using the word 'urban'. But then [they] announced nominations for their 'Best Latin Pop or Urban Album' category," Baker said. "It's making a double standard."

In addition to the amount of racial sidelining within its categories, the Grammy Awards received significant backlash for failing to incorporate international music acts in their nominations. An example includes the

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# Recipe of the Issue: Mac and Cheese

*This delicious dish can satisfy any hankering for comfort food*

Emerson Brown and Shrida Pandey  
| Opinion Editor and Online News Editor

This mac and cheese is the perfect comfort food to make after a long week of online class. Not only is it delicious, but it's also easy to make. Did we mention it only takes 7 ingredients and less than 20 minutes?

## INGREDIENTS

1/4 cup of butter

1/4 cup of flour

2 cups of milk

16-20 oz of your favorite pasta (We recommend shells or macaroni noodles.)

16 oz of cubed cheese

Salt and Pepper

## DIRECTIONS

Pasta:

On a stovetop, use a pot to boil water. Once the water is boiling, add your pasta to cook.



When your pasta finishes cooking, drain the water into a colander. Set aside for later use.

Cheese Sauce:

In a saucepan, melt the butter. Cook the water out of the butter but do not let it burn.

Once the butter is melted, stir in your flour until the mixture is combined.

Stir in a pinch of salt and pepper to taste.

Add the milk to the mixture 1/4 cup at a time, stirring in between each addition.

*Blueprint Photo/Seth Kline*

Once you add the milk, turn heat to medium-high.

Add your cubed cheddar cheese, and let it melt into the sauce.

Assembly:

Put the cheese sauce into the pot of cooked pasta and stir till combined.

Add some bread crumbs on top if desired, and enjoy!

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K-Pop (Korean pop) music industry, which amasses millions of fans throughout the world with highly successful K-pop groups such as the bands BTS, Blackpink, and EXO.

Even though the K-Pop industry is worth billions of dollars today due to its large fanbase, the Recording Academy nominated only one prominent K-Pop group, BTS, for their hit single “Dynamite” in the “Best Pop Duo/Group Performance” category.

The Recording Academy faced criticism for only nominating BTS, and, more specifically, for only nominating “Dynamite”, their first English-language single, when the group had great success with the whole album, “Map of the Soul: 7.”

Following this snub, many students began to call for an increase in international representation within the Grammy Awards, believing that it would allow music-lovers to discover new songs and artists.

“Music is universal and I feel like

songs, artists, etc. should be recognized for the work they put into creating a piece. A lot of foreign music can have the same beats and tones...of any song put out in the U.S. but they are just in a language we don't understand,” senior Chloe Wu said. “Foreign music such as K-Pop or Latin music can bring the same or even more powerful emotions and meaning to songs that people don't see until they give that artist a chance.”

Music connoisseurs also discuss the topic of how all art is subjective, so the Grammy nominations and its winners will always receive backlash. Some people pose a proposition, contrasting the Grammy's current nomination process, that the Recording Academy should base their nominations solely on numbers to ensure an impartial award distribution.

“The Grammy selection process is always controversial because people have different tastes in music. If the Grammys were chosen by pure numbers there would be no

controversy. But because it isn't, there is always going to be disagreement,” Stoll said.

Despite the controversy surrounding nominations and the subjectivity of the musical craft, music enthusiasts understand that a Grammy win and even a Grammy nomination has the ability to launch careers and even boost a musician's rise to stardom.

“It is really important to win Grammys. An example is [the artist] Brandi Carlile. Last year, she was unknown but then she released [her Grammy award-winning song] “The Joke” and now, she's performing with...a bunch of other famous artists. It's also important for discovery, new artists blow up and have bigger platforms than they ever could dream of,” Pockell-Wilson said.

However impactful a Grammy award or nomination may be to an artist's career, critics of the Awards and music lovers alike believe that the amount of Grammy nominations an artist may receive should not determine an artist's innovation, creativity, and talent. Some enthusiasts believe

that the hype surrounding the awards show itself enforces a toxic outlook towards the creativity of the musical process.

“To use an award show, like the Grammy Awards, to determine the worth of an artist or their talent is kind of taking away from their craft and the passion that they have for the music that they are making. Because at some point, there's going to be a place where they aren't making music to make music... they're making music to win awards,” Baker said.

The Recording Academy recently postponed the Awards until Mar. 14, 2021, leaving some music-lovers to hope for a more inclusive nomination list in the future.

“I hope the comments received from the reveal of these nominations has given the Grammys feedback on how to improve representation [and give more] deserving awards. I don't know if they can change these nominations, but I do hope that they learn from it, and give the awards to those who deserve it,” Wu said.



# Quote of The Issue

*“There is no need to punish yourself. Simply notice what you have been choosing and choose again.” - Neale Donald Walsch*

Kayli Harley | Online Editor-in-Chief

There is a Cherokee parable of a grandfather teaching his grandson about a fight between two wolves. One wolf is evil and represents anger, sadness, self-pity, and resentment. The other wolf is good and represents joy, love, peace, and compassion. After contemplating the idea, the grandson asks his grandfather what wolf wins the fight. The grandfather replies, “The one you feed.”

I base much of who I am and what I value on my ability to choose. The odd thing is that for how much I value choice, I frequently forget that it's at my disposal.

When poisonous rage, sorrow, or disappointment overwhelm me, I am inclined to toss the evil wolf a hefty bone. I often do not see the good wolf sitting in the corner, waiting for me to see the fault in that choice. The more I feed the evil wolf, the frailer the good wolf becomes, until its voice is merely a whisper in my ear.

Why is it that I can see the good wolf starve and still choose its opposite?

I can neglect the good wolf because I trivialize the act of choosing it. What is one more outburst or breakdown in favor of the evil wolf? Everything. Every time I choose negativity and the good wolf survives, I condition myself to believe that the choice between them is insignificant. In reality, the good wolf will never thrive if I don't actively feed it.

We can survive off of fury and despair, but it's a miserable existence. We must choose happiness in the face of our struggles. It does not matter if it's the easiest choice some days and the hardest on others; the only question is whether or not you will make it.



# The Dangerous Problems With Nextdoor

*How this innocent app dangerously strayed from its original purpose*

Erin Hambridge | Staff Writer

I'm not sure what possessed me to download the trademark lime green Nextdoor app; perhaps I wanted to feel more in tune with my community or educate myself on current events. Maybe I was just bored. Either way, I immediately regretted my decision. At first there was nothing inherently wrong with the discussions I saw. In fact, many messages were wholesome; a woman found her lost dog and several people raved about their favorite restaurants. It was only as I continued scrolling that I began to see more hurtful messages blaming and criticizing others for actions as small as dropping a piece of trash. I don't condone littering, but those discussions quickly became ugly as more and more people chimed in. Something as small as a gum wrapper was enough to fuel the fire of perceived superiority in our community.

Despite the small benefits it may provide, Nextdoor acts as a tool for people to rant and publicly shame others in an unproductive way, and instead of its intent to bring people together in hard times, Nextdoor divides them even further over trivial matters.

Nextdoor is a social media app meant to cultivate kinder, reliable neighborhood relations. The site allows users to chat with people in their area and send posts to the entire community. People are free to like and comment indiscriminately because everyone can see everyone's posts on the main feed. To create an account, you must enter a valid address in your neighborhood as well as providing your name and email.

One of the largest issues with Nextdoor is that many users rely on it as a news source. A study

conducted by Pew Research center in 2019 found that, "55 percent of US adults get their news from social media either 'often' or 'sometimes'." People view Nextdoor as a news organization, when in reality, most of the 'information' on the site is opinions veiled as facts.

Because Nextdoor does not make the distinction between facts and opinions, it quickly becomes a forum for people to engage in heated debates. The technological aspect of Nextdoor that provides anonymity for its users further encourages people to say things they never would in person.

Although Nextdoor has a 'good neighbor pledge' meant to prohibit racism, discrimination, and other harmful activities, subjects like politics and racial issues inevitably find their way into conversation.

I saw an example of that last June when many members shared their perspectives on the Black Lives Matter protests held in Lafayette. Most of the comments were well-intended, however there was a small minority of people who contributed ugly, false remarks meant to demean and ridicule the movement. It may not have been a lot, but it was enough to send an otherwise productive discussion down a spiral of hateful words and responses.

When the discussion turns to politics, people do not debate policies, but rather the character of the people behind them, causing a landslide of name calling and childish behavior.

Just hours after pro-Trump mobs stormed the U.S. Capitol building on Jan. 6, users flooded Nextdoor to spread misinformation and insensitive comments. Among the

most notable was the phrase, "it was the best thing to happen to our nation in 4 years."

Some take it even further by creating discussion groups tailored to a specific political viewpoint. It is jarring to see groups proclaiming themselves gun activists alongside ping pong and puzzle clubs.

These groups actively regulate who is in them and therefore the ideas in them. People seek out and ask to join the groups they know share their same beliefs and so they hear their own opinions constantly repeated, creating an echo chamber.

An echo chamber forms when a group of people only encounter information that aligns and reinforces their own beliefs. The absence of rebuttal and the continuous repetition of their viewpoints causes members of the chamber to view other perspectives with hostility and suspicion, as well as causing a polarizing effect on their political beliefs.

According to an article written by the Paleo Foundation, "echo chambers... limit our ability to effectively solve problems and respond to the exact issues that they endeavor to address." Echo chambers often paint people who disagree as the 'enemy.'

Nothing productive is produced when these discussion groups limit their exposure to other viewpoints

in the community. In fact, all it does it alienate us from each other in a time when unity is more important than any political belief.

There is no doubt that Lafayette is a small, and very privileged community. That combination presents itself on Nextdoor, where people take it upon themselves to attack and call out others for their actions and opinions.

Many people believe they have the right to belittle their neighbors simply because they see themselves as better. This superiority stems from a number of things, the most prominent being the underlying competitiveness in our community. People's need to achieve some unmeasurable status leads them to insult and put down their community members.

This can even escalate beyond words when people post photos of their neighbors essentially 'caught in the act.' Whether that action was a poor parking job or refusal to clean up after their dog, it is a gross invasion of privacy and contributes to a culture of shaming and humiliation.

The Nextdoor we see today is the product of a community with too much time on its hands, that is more than willing to satisfy people's need to attack and shame others at the cost of its original purpose of creating a better neighborhood.





# The Uncomfortable Truth: We Must Stop Period Shaming

*The practice harms girls and women alike, limiting our progress as a society*

Julia Poole, Sabrina Agazzi, and Shrida Pandey |  
Online Feature Editor, Copy Editor, and Online News Editor

If you add up the average number of days a woman is on her period in her lifetime, it results in about 10 years. Years filled with misery, embarrassment, discrimination, and isolation. About half the world's population must suffer through the monthly trauma, yet society shuns any acknowledgment of menstruation.

The worst part of having a period is the stigma; girls must learn about sanitary products, hormonal changes, excruciatingly-painful cramps, and the art of the "Period Dance", or keeping everything surrounding menstruation hidden under society's blanket of conformity and suppression. Everyone with a period is familiar with the Dance: hurrying to the bathroom with a tampon tucked in your boot, stressing when to change your sanitary product without contracting Toxic Shock Syndrome (TSS), secretly throwing up between classes from debilitating menstrual cramps, or answering the question "How are you?" with an automated "Good" and a fake smile all while your insides scream.

Even as you read this, you may be wondering why there is a story about blood and vaginas in a school newspaper. This is a valid question, because in all realms of life --politics, religion, and the workplace-- those with menses suffer silently in order to comply with social norms. Society tells us that periods are something to keep locked in a box, as if all our traumas and life experiences must be covered in wrapping paper and

a bow. The truth is, periods are a part of the reproductive system, vital to life, and it's time we stop cringing about it.

From a young age, girls learn to be ashamed of their periods and instead of finding a sense of solidarity with peers, girls hide their pads and tampons and foster a sense of shame. Unsurprisingly, this period shame translates to adulthood. According to the New York Post, 58 percent of women feel embarrassed about their periods.

Although discerning and upsetting, period shame for women is understandable. For one, Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism, three of the largest religions in the world, all historically considered (or still consider) women on their periods "impure" and "unclean". The Bible even says that those around women on their periods are "unclean" as well.

Despite a universal taboo surrounding periods, the reproductive cycle allows women to have children and plays a critical role in the circle of life. Yet, instead of appreciating women for their sacrifice and life-creating power, many religions attack them for it.

Not only do women face this spiritual stigma, but they also face stereotypes when they are on their periods. American media portrays

women on their periods as "hormonal," "emotional," and even "hostile". If a woman is angry or upset, her genuine emotions are often dismissed with "it must be her time of the month" or "looks like someone's having lady troubles". In a poll of 2,000 women conducted by Chartered Institute of Personnel Development (CPD), they found that this stigma translates into workplace inequality, with 57 percent of respondents saying that they had to lie to their managers about why they needed a sick day. Furthermore, one quarter of respondents said they did not have sanitary bins at work, and almost one-third did not have constant access to a toilet.

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## Period Stigma

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While these slights may seem insignificant, they are mere examples of the power period stigma holds over women's lives. It influences their job performance, with the average woman perceiving herself to be about 33 per cent less productive on bad period days. Period stigma ultimately creates fewer opportunities and career advancement possibilities for women.

Women already face a draining financial obstacle when it comes to their periods: according to Digital Hub, the total cost of menstrual products in an average woman's reproductive lifetime is \$6,360, and that's not even taking into account the cost of productivity, laundry, period complications, period cravings, and many more menses-related costs. If those costs weren't enough, sanitary products that are vital to basic hygiene are considered a "luxury item" and have a hefty "pink tax" as a result. Groceries and medicine don't get taxed, yet the "pink tax" considers tampons and pads nonessential. The government should provide free sanitary supplies in public restrooms, not force women to pay valuable money on vital supplies. The "pink tax" highlights the fact that period stigma transcends societal limitations and solidifies as governmental discrimination.

While political and economic inequity are serious problems, the largest issue with period stigma is the resulting oppression of women. In many developing countries, societal customs ban women on their periods from many aspects of life. Oftentimes, women cannot pray, visit temples, cook, go to school, or even stay in their own homes. In some places, women must stay in chhaupadi huts when they are menstruating. Girls endure freezing temperatures, smoke inhalation, animal attacks, rape, and domestic abuse in these isolated places.

Period stigma promotes feelings of isolation and shame, which,

coupled with premenstrual syndrome (PMS), can lead to mental health disorders such as depression and anxiety. According to Net Doctor, ninety percent of women suffer from PMS, resulting in symptoms ranging from bloating, breast pain, and acne, to anxiety, social isolation, and body dysmorphia. Periods cause many changes in the levels of hormones, including the stress hormone cortisol, leading to increased feelings of anxiousness during PMS. When society delegitimizes this pain and forces girls to endure these chemical imbalances alone, it often results in mental health disorders, and sometimes, suicide.

As a result of period shame and poverty, many women do not have access to water, sanitation, toilets, a gynecologist, or sanitary napkins. 335 million girls around the world go to school without water and soap to wash their hands, according to UNICEF. Many girls must use dried leaves, plastic, cloth, and rags as substitutes for pads. As a result of this poor menstrual hygiene, women are more susceptible to urinary tract infections (UTIs), yeast infections, and Hepatitis B, which can cause long term physical effects.

The inaccessibility of sanitary products, however, is not just in developing countries. According to Ananya Grover's Ted Talk, "A Campaign for Period Positivity," 64% of women in St. Louis, Missouri could not afford menstrual hygiene supplies in the last year.

One of the most detrimental effects of period shame is that many girls are denied access to education when they are on their periods. According to The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), 1 in 5 girls in India must drop out of school, due to missing about 25 percent of instruction from being on their period and falling behind. Similarly, in Sub-Saharan Africa, one in 10 girls skips school or drops out entirely due to a lack of adequate menstrual products and proper sanitation during their periods, according to World Health Orga-

nization (WHO). Without education, women in these developing countries will remain in poverty and continue to be oppressed.

The stigma of periods follows women around the world. Sadly, most period stigma comes from the lack of health education people receive on periods. According to Grover, two-thirds of high school girls in rural India do not understand what their bodies are going through. Their initial thought is usually panic, believing that they are injured. Many women who experienced the lack of health education brought on by period shame will project it onto their daughters, and the cycle continues.

Many girls are forced into a cycle of poverty that is near impossible to escape: because of their gender, they cannot attend school, and because they don't receive an education, they cannot create economic opportunities to move up in the world.

Periods are not shameful, and it is time society stops acting like

they are. Women shouldn't be discriminated against because of religion, social stigma, or embarrassment. The most effective way to break the stigma is through education, not just of women, but of all genders. We must open the conversation up to everyone, and teach people about the importance of equality, respect, and support. We must turn discrimination and stigmatization into admiration. Through this open dialogue, we will not only shift people's mindsets, but also create a generation dedicated to providing free sanitary products to girls in need, exerting pressure on governments to improve sanitation, and eliminating the inequities that stand in the way of female education and employment. When we open the conversation up to everyone, we create a world of people who choose action over inaction, love over hate, and respect over isolation. We must educate those on menstruation, and only then can we win the fight for female empowerment.

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# America's Inadequate Leadership Problem

*2020's previously unthinkable disasters all have one cause: a lack of capable leadership*

Andrew Habas, Brendan Connelly,  
and Zach Snyder | Staff Writers

Imagine describing 2020 to children many years from now. What will you say? Likely, you will include the words "COVID-19", "police brutality", "chaos", and "Trump."

Looking back at the cause of the many catastrophes that have arisen in a mere year, it is clear that the leadership within the United States is slowly deteriorating, resulting in the rise of new issues and contributing to the decline of our country.

2020 began and ended with COVID-19. We watched as death tolls rose in China and Italy, and eventually encroached upon the United States in March. In the modern digital and scientific age, many first world countries across the globe created a formidable response to this virus, a stark contrast to that of the United States. The question we all must ask ourselves is 'why?'

The United States faces an ever

growing political divide, furthering polarity of bipartisan politics and leaving a resounding impact on our nation's COVID-19 response. President Trump refused to create a coherent national response, creating a patchwork of varying state restrictions. Trump's followers believed his false claims about masks and refused to wear them, further spreading the virus.

Currently, we are enduring another major outbreak. While we are certainly more well equipped to handle it, the United States' death toll of 400,000 is incomprehensible compared to Australia's 909. Both developed countries, Australia immediately instituted strict guidance and restrictions, demonstrating how leadership is effective and America lacks it.

This year, we witnessed political tensions coming to a breaking point with police brutality and systematic racism, setting off the nationwide Black Lives Matter

(BLM) protests. Every year, Americans watch horrifying images and videos of violence that are difficult to reflect on. Despite years of this, no leaders accept it as their responsibility to create the change we need.

While systemic racism in the United States is far less obvious than it was fifty-some years ago, it is still prevalent. Over the past five decades, the government has outlawed racist regulation at both a state and local level. Despite this, Harvard University found that Black people are still six times more likely to be killed by police.

This is the world we live in, despite hundreds of years of "progress." Only this year, many of us realized the true scale of what is happening in our country, reminded of flawed police systems with the recent violence involving George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Jacob Blake, and many others. However, the tragedies of these three people have yet to render a reaction by lawmakers in Washington.

As a nation, we failed. Leaders did not unite us as a country or cooperate to protect citizens from COVID-19 or from the divisions in our nation. Our leaders failed

to provide the resources and mandates necessary for the success in our battle against the pandemic as well as police violence towards people of color.

Recently, blindly loyal Trump supporters invaded the Capitol building, inspired and propagated by the former President. In days leading up to the chaos on Jan. 6, Trump tweeted and retweeted posts encouraging people to attend a march on this date, and since Nov. 3, he spread lies that the election had widespread voter fraud and was 'stolen'.

This unprecedented, previously unimaginable, violence and domestic terrorism adequately sum up the failure of American Democracy. Trump's inadequate response to COVID-19, his disregard for the suffering of Black people across the nation, and his encouragement of the attack on the Capitol, all put the foundations of our democracy in danger.

However, the fact that Trump created that much violence and chaos this year speaks to a greater problem. There exists a deeper issue in the American system of government and its leadership that must be dealt with as we tackle the issues of the 21st century.

## The Solution: Younger Leadership

Brendan Connelly and Zach Snyder | Staff Writers

If 2020 proved anything, it is the need for better, stronger, and more thoughtful leaders. The indecisive and disconnected leaders across the country continue to demonstrate the need for young, diverse, connected leaders throughout the nation.

2020 showed the whole world that our leaders failed. Donald Trump failed.

But, Trump is the product of deeper problems. Our governing bodies consist of majority old,

white men who fill the spaces of government. Patterns in our society and government combined with the fear of change and a strong partisan divide pushed Trump into the White House just as it pushed many other old white men into office.

Older leaders have the privilege not to care. They and their posterity, or at least their male posterity, will have all the rights and privileges they do. Rather than addressing the future of

America, they have the privilege to only focus on imminent issues and create temporary solutions that only create larger issues.

According to the organization 4-H, 51 percent of youth believe our government has weak leadership and 76 percent say the current leaders are not focusing on the most important issues.

Our leaders are not doing an adequate job of addressing the 21st-century problem; they don't even understand 21st-century problems.

The average age of Senators is

63 while the average age of the country is 38, the Millennials and Gen Zers in the United States have time, strong aspirations and a wide view of the current and most important issues.

If a problem is not going to affect their future, the leaders have no reason to try and understand it. Because of this, they shouldn't be leading. If people don't have a stake in the game, they will be a lot less motivated to play it carefully.

*Continued on 37*

# The Solution: Regulation in the Senate

Andrew Habas | Staff Writer

In order to solve persistent political problems, we must establish new regulations in the Senate that will push forth national change and leadership.

As of now, senators serve six years and can be elected as many times as they want. Because of this, senators are able to make poor decisions or squander their time without the pressing threat of being voted out.

To combat this, we must lower senators' term length to four years, creating consistent new leadership and thus greater opportunities for change through fresh ideas.

Additionally, senators must be limited to two terms, similar to rules for governors or presidents, so that some senators do not become overpowering and limit opportunities for new leaders.

We would have more candidates running for positions, and current senators would feel pressure to act during their eight years in office.

Our country took a big step backward with President Trump. The House of Representatives impeached him, but the Republican-controlled Senate never convicted him. With Trump in office, Republicans could pursue their agenda and retain popular support amongst conservative voters.

If we instituted term limits and shortened term lengths, we may have had a Democratic controlled Senate that could stand up and replace an incompetent leader.

Many voters were fed up with leadership in Washington during the 2018 midterms. Because of the organization of the election of senators, though, only one-

third of senators could be ousted or reelected. If voters had the opportunity to elect new leadership, change could have happened much sooner.

We saw this recently in Georgia with the elections of Jon Ossoff and Raphael Warnock. The retirement of one incumbent in one race and neither candidate getting over 50 percent of the vote in November led to special runoff elections in January. Georgia has been a historically red state for years, yet voters chose President Biden in November and elected two Democratic senators in January, giving control of the Senate to the Democrats. Had these elections occurred under normal circumstances, the results could have gone differently.

America is becoming more liberal as young and diverse voters

gain the opportunity to vote. To reflect the pace at which America is changing, we must change senators' term regulations to have elections more frequently.

Implementing these restrictions for Senate positions could create a more cooperative Senate, contrasting the gridlock currently plaguing national politics. With shorter terms, senators would feel more pressure to make change for their constituents, thus creating a more moderate Senate.

Times are always changing day after day, our country moves so fast and we must have leadership that is constantly changing in order to keep up with our fast-paced lifestyle. The absolute only way for change to happen is to open up more opportunities for it, and that starts with more election opportunities within the Senate.

## Young Leadership

*Continued from 36*

Looking at climate change, only younger citizens in America will experience the effects. They have inherent pressure to make a change because their lives and homes will be shaped by climate change in the next 20 years. Without dramatic action now, Earth will soon become too hostile for life, but current leaders place profit over long-term change. They will be dead because of their age before climate change kills them.

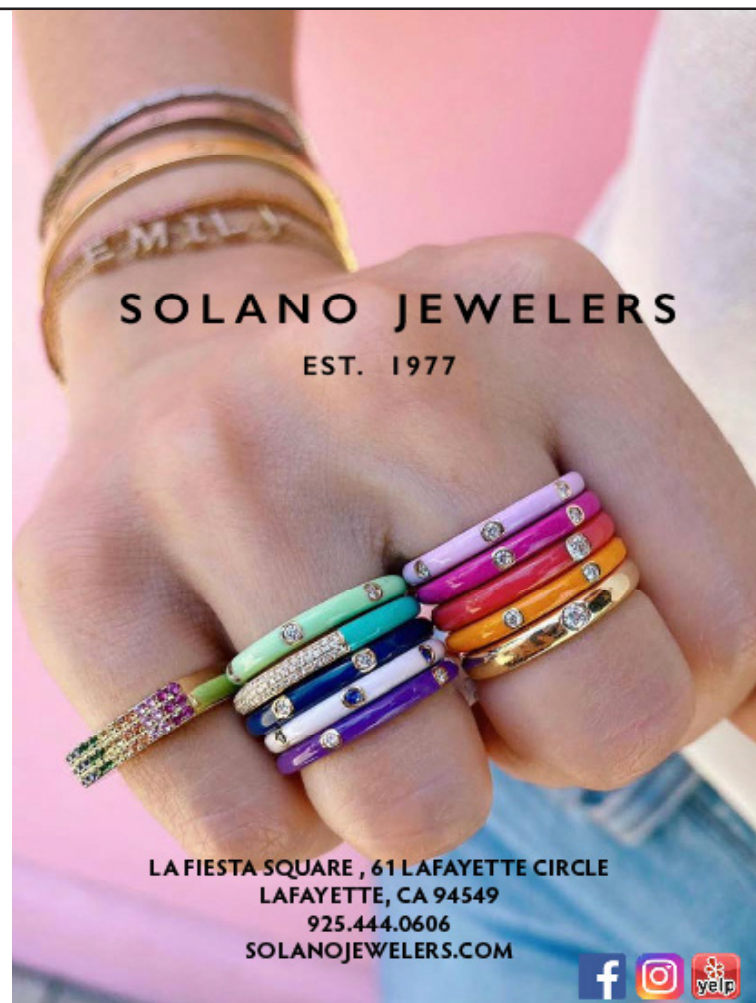
Today, younger Americans grow up more open-minded and entertain all sorts of ideas, yet the government does not reflect that. Our government should be a collaboration of openly minded citizens of diverse backgrounds with the ability to hear and react to ideas as well as formulate solutions collectively.

The current leaders believe they are still living in the same country as the one they grew up

in. Older generations of America grew up in whiter, straighter, and more strictly religious communities and learned to ignore or discriminate against many minorities. America changed, though, and the leaders are incapable of recognizing those changes.

Issues such as racial, income, and LGBTQ+ inequalities need to be tackled by diverse groups. Personal experiences are arguably the most influential motivating devices and having more members of marginalized groups in office will provide direct attention towards issues that can easily be ignored by the current leadership of our nation.

Governmental changes do not need to be extensive attempts to "modernize" the current leaders of the United States, this change needs to come through the influx of younger and more diverse leaders to our governmental offices to combat, solve, and prioritize the vast issues we face.



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# Eurocentric Beauty Standards Harm People of Color

*The Eurocentric beauty ideal contributes to systemic racism and low self-esteem*

Shrida Pandey | Online News Editor

As a child, my relatives would always look at my skin and call me “kalo,” the Nepali word for dark, and tell me I needed to spend less time in the sun. The moment I realized my darkness, I also realized it was something I needed to fix. Worldwide media made this insecurity worse as it reinforced and embraced the idea of Eurocentric beauty, the idea that those with lighter skin, straight hair, and a more “European” looking nose are more attractive than their non-white counterparts.

This beauty standard can be seen around the world in magazines, entertainment, and culture promoting the idea of “white” beauty and it harms people of color by contributing to the idea that whiteness equals beauty.

Eurocentric beauty’s effect on the world originates from colonization. As Europe colonized the world, they promoted the idea of their superiority in beauty, intellect, and power. Even after European countries left these places, their beauty standards remained in these societies.

Today, Europe’s influence continues to dominate foreign and domestic beauty markets.

The beauty industry in India markets skin whitening creams to Indian people as the example of beauty, while according the Korea Gallup Poll, around one in every three women between the ages of 19 to 29 in South Korea have altered their appearance with many getting double eyelid surgery to look more “Eurocentric”. Seventy-seven percent of women in Nigeria use skin whitening products

to bleach their skin. These are only a few examples of Eurocentric beauty influencing people of color. Yet, it shows the deep influence it has on other countries.

The beauty industry profits off of people of color’s insecurities and racist ideas of beauty. Skin whitening is an \$8 billion industry, a combination of both Eurocentric beauty standards and federalistic ideals where lighter skin tone

beauty.

Teenagers largely face Eurocentric beauty standards. A specific example of this comes from Brandy Melville. The popular teenage clothing brand, with a “one size fits all” approach, has a wide social media following and targets their clothing specifically towards girls from ages 13 to 21. Yet they lack diversity with predominantly white, skinny models.

Brandy Melville promotes their clothes to all teenagers, in an effort to acquire their whole market in order to make more sales. But just like so many other clothing brands, they do not give the

els of depression then peers with lighter skin tones. Discrimination by society is largely to blame for this statistic because it views those with darker skin with increasingly more scrutiny than those with lighter skin.

A society with Eurocentric beauty standards doesn’t only harm teenagers but also damages children’s self-regard.

In 2011, researchers redid the 1939 Clark Doll experiment where children of all races were placed in front of two dolls. Both dolls were identical except for their skin tone, with one being white and the other Black. The



Blueprint Cartoon / Freschetta Warren

correlated to a higher social class, South Korea is the plastic surgery capital of the world, and Black women spend nine times more on products than any other racial groups.

The beauty industry continuously hurts people of color by promoting images of unattainable beauty to gain more money. As a result, this damaging cycle helps create a society based on white

teenagers of color who buy their clothes any representation. Instead, they perpetuate the idea of Eurocentric beauty which can cause devastating effects to teenagers of color self esteem, a time when self confidence already tends to be low.

According to research in Sage Journal’s Society and Mental Health, Black teenagers with darker skin tones have higher lev-

trial conductors asked the children to pick the doll that was the most beautiful. The 2011 experiment yielded the same result as the one in 1939: children overwhelmingly said the white doll was more beautiful and associated it with good qualities.

This result isn’t shocking considering how society has always been geared towards white beauty,

*Continued on 39*

# Benefits of the Body Neutrality Movement

## *Why body neutrality is a healthier mindset than body positivity*

Aysa Craig | Copy Editor

“You are wonderfully made” and “you should feel confident in your own skin” -- these statements are often recycled amongst friends. It is easy to look your best friend in the eye and tell them how perfect they are, yet when you turn away to look at yourself in the mirror, the narrative changes. How can someone not hold this double standard of comparison when we live in a world where everything is edited to perfection on social media, including the unattainable body type.

Through the lack of representation of natural bodies, society teaches us that only one body type is acceptable and beautiful. As a result of this, different movements aiming to improve people's self-image have taken off in past years, including the “body positive” movement and, more recently, the “body neutrality” movement.

Whether it be in TV shows, movies, magazines, advertisements, music videos, or social media, people idolize the perfect body everywhere, creating a toxic environment for those who do not fit into society's specific beauty

standards. Body inclusive movements also aim for more representation of realistic bodies in the media.

The body positive movement spreads the message that you should love your body no matter its shape or size, whereas the body neutrality movement encourages you to accept your body and realize it is only a small portion of who you are. Both movements value the inclusivity of all body types, however, body positivity places a significant emphasis on physical appearance, causing some people to fixate on making themselves attractive for others. Body neutrality, on the other hand, focuses on who a person is on the inside. Being body neutral means appreciating all that your body has done for you but understanding it is not representative of your worth.

Although body positivity spreads the message that everyone should love their body, the body neutrality movement is a healthier mindset because it disregards society's toxic body standards all together. Body neutrality stems from a place of appreciation rather than

dissatisfaction and is a less demanding and more inclusive approach for individuals.

The body positive movement is well-intentioned but misleading. Body positivity means that everybody is beautiful, yet it suggests that a person has to love and embrace the size of their body first before they think about or do anything else. This is a much harder task than it seems because social media labels one body type as better than the other which is constantly drilled into people's minds. Learning to love something different from what society praises over is challenging and can take a lot of time, which hampers feelings of happiness and freedom.

Body neutrality is less demanding because a person doesn't have to reach a certain mindset before moving on from worrying about body image. Body neutrality separates the weight and size of a body from one's self-image and worth and encourages people to think less about how their body looks in general. It acknowledges that everyone critiques their body in some way. Instead of changing your body to please others, body neutrality encourages people to make peace with their body. It is okay to feel indifferent about your body, but you should accept it for what it is.

Body positivity forces an individ-

ual to go from self-doubt to the extreme of love. For example, when you are body positive you have to love the size of your legs no matter what. If you are body neutral though, you don't have to love your legs, you can simply accept them. You can acknowledge that your legs are there and that they function for you, but that they are only a small part of who you are in the grand scheme of things.

Because body positivity still forces people to focus on their looks, it leads to constant critiquing and low self-esteem which can lead to a host of mental illnesses including depression. Lack of self-esteem during young adulthood increases an individual's chance of developing depression as an adult which can have long lasting effects in everyday life. Teenagers will feel the implications of low self-esteem and a lack of confidence in the real world when they are planning out their future.

Many people face body image issues at some point in their life. Replacing body positivity with body neutrality is doable because body neutrality is less demanding, and will make a big difference in how people feel about themselves both, externally and internally. Despite what society leads us to think, there is so much more to us as people than just our bodies.

## Eurocentric Beauty

*Continued from 38*

but it is dangerous because of children of color having blatant dislike of their own skin tone.

Although this study is a decade old, those children in the study currently attend high school and have grown up with those childhood ideas, perpetuated by beauty markets and clothing brands.

People of color grow up with the idea that they are inferior to white people in societal worth, continu-

ing the systematic oppression they have to face. It shows the bias and prejudice people of color face in their own ethnicities in a form of cultural colorism, where people of the same race have their own prejudices and are treated differently based on their skin color.

According to research by the Social Race Ethn, “[People of color] of lighter skin are awarded social and economic privileges because of their closer [physical] resemblance to whites and their assumed superior social value relative to their darker-skinned

counterparts.” Cultural colorism's social inequality can be found in the justice system, health disparities, and even wealth.

This racist system of beauty tells the vast majority of the population that society values and treats “Eurocentric” looking people of color better than those who don't. This isn't just a beauty issue, rather an equity one.

The solution to solve the racism of Eurocentric beauty is simple: Increase the representation of people of color in the media.

It is time to see people of color

as the main characters of books, television shows, and movies, alongside seeing more diverse representation in the beauty industry. It is time for people of color to be celebrated rather than compared to their white peers. It is time for a change.

We as a society need to understand the systematic racism people of color have faced and that it has been part of our world for centuries. Actively working to help change these prejudices and biases in our society will improve racial equality.



# Sarah Fuller Inspires Young Female Athletes

*Sarah Fuller breaks down the wall separating predominantly male and female sports*

Alexandra Ames and Jacque Peacock  
| Staff Writers

A girl sits in the locker room and laces up her cleats before her big debut. She ties her hair back, pulls up her socks, and puts on her football helmet, ready to step out on the field.

Vanderbilt soccer goalie Sarah Fuller became the first female kicker ever to participate in a Power 5 collegiate football game. She also scored an extra point for the team, breaking the gender barrier in a predominantly male sport.

Fuller sparked attention nationwide and served as an inspiration for female athletes. Her story taught them to vouch for themselves in whatever they may pursue.

“Sarah Fuller showed that sports should not be labeled as a male or female sport, and anyone can play any sport despite their gender identification,” junior varsity (JV) basketball player and sophomore Nikki McCarthy said.

Sarah Fuller’s story not only inspired young women but confirmed that anything is possible.

“Sarah Fuller has really shown me that if you put your mind to something and put the work in you can accomplish great things. All girls are capable of doing what

boys can too,” JV soccer player and sophomore Camryn Salzar said.

Fuller’s step into the predominantly male world of collegiate football baited the question of why genders do not mix on sports teams.

“I think that what Acalanes female athletes should take away is that it is okay to challenge those gender gaps, whether that is in sports themselves or in future fields that they want to go into,” varsity volleyball coach Haley Walsh said.

Before Sarah’s feat female and male athletes never combined on a major scale in sports generally played entirely by either men or women. The main obstacle that dismissed the possibility of co-ed teams was the different body types between boys and girls.

“I think there are even different body types within our own genders. I think that challenging those body stereotypes is going to allow, in the future, there to be more representation in collegiate sports,” Walsh said.

For some athletes, competing on a co-ed team or program puts them in an uncomfortable situation and thus acts as a deterrent. However, Fuller’s successful blend into an all-male sport reveals that athletes, male or female, can find a way to overcome the initial awkwardness and discomfort.

“I think that changes the team dynamics a lot and there’s no longer that unity within the gender. Now you have to find that unity somewhere else. I think that

her being able to do that successfully is an inspiration to young female athletes,” Walsh said.

Sarah Fuller’s accomplishment crossed a major threshold for sports. Female athletes look to the future with excitement and anticipate that colleges will continue to build on the foundation Fuller created.

“There are definitely still stereotypes about how girls can’t play guy sports because they aren’t as strong or fast and that boys can’t play girls sports because that would make them weak. I think it is an evolving topic that will be addressed with new generations to come,” JV lacrosse player and junior Elise Flagg said.

While gender stereotypes, unfortunately, follow women outside of sports as well, women who face stereotypes elsewhere can look to Fuller to investigate standards that don’t hold them as equals to their male counterparts.

“There are always gaps in wages, representation, fields like STEM-based fields, and so it is OK to challenge those gaps, even if you’re putting yourself in an uncomfortable situation,” Walsh said.

Sarah’s triumph for female athletes everywhere started with her hard work and determination. Female athletes recognize that in order to write the next chapter of female representation in predominantly male sports, they must be just as driven as Fuller.

“I think something that stands out most to me is that she was not only dedicated to her soccer team, but she was also training to play on the football team. I was very impressed with the fact that days before she was the first female to kick in college football, she led the Vanderbilt soccer team to win the Southeastern Conference (SEC) title,” Salazar said.

Female athletes may use Fuller’s story as a source of inspiration to keep pushing forward with tenacity and purpose. Fuller’s achievement provides refreshing insight into the near future of collegiate sports and beyond.

“I think that she is an amazing role model for young female athletes because she has proven that girls are capable of doing just what boys do,” Walsh said. “She also has encouraged them to continue to chase their goals.”



# The Shutdown of Travel Sports Programs

*Student-athletes find themselves without a sport as travel sport cancelations continue*

Kyle Bielawski, Connor Faust, and Miller Smith | Staff Writers

As the collegiate process becomes more and more selective, athletes find themselves having to look outside the box to distinguish themselves from fellow athletes. For some, this leaves travel teams as their best or even only chance of earning a scholarship to a division one college.

With the cancellation of the high school sports season, this effect has only become more profound. Travel team programs continue to roll with the punches as they adhere to COVID-19 precautions and regulations, however, some view sports as a liability in their entirety during these unprecedented times forcing them to stop participating in practices.

Cancelations continue as games and tournaments for Acalanes travel team athletes and the greater Bay Area as a result of the rising COVID cases. With the spike in cases, additional restrictions continue to pile on in Contra Costa County and the surrounding area.

Health concerns continue to drive restrictions and cancelations of both tournaments and practices as a part of the larger effort to combat COVID-19. While cancelations have not been universal, the implementation of restrictions has been.

"Currently due to high covid cases tournaments have been postponed for the time being but we will start looking to travel again in the upcoming weeks. During practice, we stay distanced and the coaches have to wear masks during our practices and so do we," baseball player and sophomore Tobias Schwing said.

These regulations have produced scattered results, and while many teams have canceled practices, travel teams have continued to practice up until recently.

"I think the actions that have been taken are keeping us safe. However, it isn't like a normal season where we can do what we normally do but it's okay as long as we are safe and still get to play a little," football player and sophomore Nathan Kim said.

While these have been state-driven requirements, parents find themselves with similar concerns to that of public health officials regarding

COVID-19. While states have forcefully closed high school sports, parents have had a different stance on the closure of travel sports.

"I think sports is radically different from school in the sense that teachers seem to be much more worried than the coaches do. There is more flexibility and safety in sports than obviously going to school," Acalanes parent Shannon Murphy said.

Acalanes sports have most certainly felt the challenges of practicing during such difficult times. In the fall months of September, October, and November, football was able to use shared equipment. This consisted of weights, footballs, and other equipment, but as December and the winter months approached, cases rose and the football program further restricted their players with new regulations.

"Acalanes football was affected heavily by COVID because we were not allowed to play normal football and we could only practice and weren't allowed to use equipment when we practiced," football player and junior Logan Ketcham said.

By comparison, however, some feel that travel teams have lacked restrictions similar to that of school sports.

"The school team didn't really get to have a season my sophomore year, and my junior year season is definitely in question because they have a lot of rules in place for what you can do, how big the groups are, etc. But my club team feels like it isn't regulated at all besides not being able to play at all while there are stay at home orders," ADVNC lacrosse player and junior Aidan O'Brien said.

Students also voice concerns surrounding issues of recruitment as many rely on travel sports for access to recruiters and college coaches.

"I feel as though it is harder to get recognized for your talent if you're only playing high school baseball because scouts do not travel to watch a high school baseball game. You'll probably be a better prospect by playing in showcase tournaments to get the most exposure possible," Schwing said.

However, in determining the necessity of these regulations, many find themselves conflicted when discussing if travel sport should resume.

"Part of me thinks you should take every precaution to not spread it at all. But then on the other hand there are other tolls that are being taken on kids for not being able to play sports, not being able to socialize," ADVNC travel coach Mike Schlosser said. "I think it's important to at least consider that when you're weighing that risk. But once again, this is a risk that involves people potentially losing their lives. So it's really hard, because [priority] one is preserving life."

Despite all of the setbacks and challenges high school sports and athletes have faced, many athletes have used the pandemic as an opportunity to really dedicate themselves to their sport.

"I think this last year has presented an incredible opportunity for the athletes that have been willing to continue working and training and getting better at their sport," Bay Area Ballplayers Director Steve Hammond said. "The athletes that I see that have been motivated throughout the pandemic have put themselves in a great position moving forward."



Blueprint Photo/Mara Korzeniewska



# Certain Sports Rise in Popularity During Shelter-in-Place

*With restrictions on contact sports, students find new sports to participate in during the lockdown*

Saylen Cardoni, Griffin Ruebner, and August Walker | Staff Writers

The closure of Acalanes athletics camps left athletes reeling, unsure of how to remain active during the strict shelter-in-place order. Student-athletes, however, can participate in sports where competitors stay distant or in games played solo while still abiding by health restrictions.

Golf, for example, is one sport which people can play safely either by themselves or with a small group.

"I really like how you don't have to compete against other people. You are just playing against yourself and your own personal best" sophomore Ryan Coyle said.

The Acalanes golf team participates in games against other schools and will be available to athletes looking to join when athletics make their return to campus.

"I feel golf would be a great activity for people to play during shelter-in-place. Golf is a sport that's played outdoors and it's easy to do social distancing from the other players in the group you're playing with" Acalanes golf coach Tim Scott said.

Running is another option for athletes working to stay in shape and improve their health to prepare themselves for the upcoming season.

"Running is a sport that makes you stronger in many ways. It acts as an escape and provides a liberating feeling" senior Sam Roth said. "Most people think of running as a punishment for other sports or a boring way of getting exercise. If you think of running as an exciting opportunity and adventure with fitness as a byproduct, it is much more enjoyable."

Runners can participate in the Acalanes track and field program when it resumes if they wish to take their running to the next level.

While many available sports are those played by a single person, some multiplay-



Blueprint Photo/Jojo Bishop

er sports are still possible to participate in if social distancing measures are in place at all times, such as tennis.

"Tennis is definitely one of the less contact-heavy sports. There's a nice net that separates people... tennis would definitely be on top of the list of sports to reintroduce. Most of the base elements of the sport have little to no risk," sophomore James Brophy said.

The Acalanes tennis program is available for athletes looking to compete safely and is another possible alternative for athletes that may be playing a different sport in a normal year.

Additionally, Mountain biking is a perfect way to connect with the great outdoors, get a workout in, and enjoy yourself, all at the same time. Riders of all different skill levels can find trails right for them.

"Mountain biking is really exhilarating, and you get to be in nature all the time. [Also,] you are socially distant from people and you get that good sense of outside exhilaration," junior Mick Jordan said. "I actually find it peaceful riding by myself, where I don't have to rely on my friends to

have fun."

There is no official Acalanes mountain biking team, although there is a cross country biking club.

Fishing also provides students with a way to get some fresh air and strengthen their arms and core muscles reeling in fish. Despite what some might think, fishing takes intense skill and precision.

"Every now and then I'll go with a couple of my friends, but we'll stay pretty far apart and outside. [It is a great way to] hang out with your friends, catch fish, maybe cook and eat dinner" sophomore Hunter Goyert said.

Acalanes does not have a fishing program but there are locations around Lafayette available for fishing.

Although many sports cannot take place within the current regulations, there will always be ways for students to adapt and find a solution.

"If it wasn't for shelter in place I definitely would be mountain biking with friends, but this pandemic has us adjusting to everything," Jordan said.

# Physical Education During Hybrid Learning

## *What students can expect in their second semester of Physical Education*

Tom Bequette | Online Sports Editor

For the past ten months coronavirus has stripped students of the opportunity to not only participate in team sports but in in-person Physical Education (PE) as well. And while the coronavirus has certainly caused greater problems, the opportunity to exercise with one's peers is an important step towards a healthy lifestyle, as well as a perfect opportunity to meet new people and socialize. However, with the new hybrid model on the horizon, PE will have to undergo drastic changes.

First and foremost nothing is changing immediately. The switch to the hybrid model will only begin once Contra Costa County is out of the purple tier of coronavirus numbers for two weeks.

But when hybrid learning gets underway, classes will once again meet in-person with major adjustments to better ensure the safety of the students.

"PE classes will be split up or around our various facilities -- the big gym, small gym, track/stadium, middle grass field, and tennis courts -- to maintain appropriate distancing guidelines," Sports Medicine teacher Chris Clark said.

"Students will remain socially distanced for roll call and warm-ups, and from then on we will continue to take every possible precaution."

Students will only participate in distanced activities, cutting contact-sports like soccer and basketball.

"PE units will depend on which tier we are in and will likely mirror what is being allowed in the sports camps," Clark said. "We will try to minimize close contact opportunities and we are more likely to engage in activities that still allow for distancing like singles table tennis and badminton, pickleball, or fitness and yoga."

Additionally, equipment will get consistent cleaning throughout the day to control bacteria and germs.

"If we are allowed to use equipment, appropriate cleaning of materials will take place during and in between classes," Clark said.

"If equipment isn't allowed, then students will have some sort of fitness activity to complete during the period."

One limitation of the new system is that

students will not change clothes during PE, rendering them unable to participate in units such as swimming. The weight room will shut down for the semester as well.

"There will be no swimming for sure as we have been told that students will not change for PE, and will not use any locker rooms. This limitation by itself will drastically change the look of PE classes until we get to the other side of COVID," Weight Training teacher Mike Ivankovic said.

The elimination of changing and locker rooms altogether is to limit the time students spend in close quarters to each other, as well as the number of germs spread through lockers and PE uniforms.

"We're just trying to get rid of as much risk as we can, and locker rooms are a big high-risk area," Ivankovic said.

When asked about his concerns for the new hybrid model, Clark cited the challenge of getting students to always follow protocols as a major worry.

"I think the biggest concern is trying to ensure students follow all protocols for being on campus including staying socially distanced and wearing masks. Distancing in classrooms is much easier and more obvious because the desks have already been appropriately distanced," Clark said. "This isn't necessarily

true yet for our PE facilities or outdoor spaces. So, establishing and maintaining these specific protocols for PE may be initially challenging as we learn to work in our PE spaces in this new way."

However, a big point of emphasis is that nothing is set in stone and as circumstances evolve the district will do its best to change its plans accordingly.

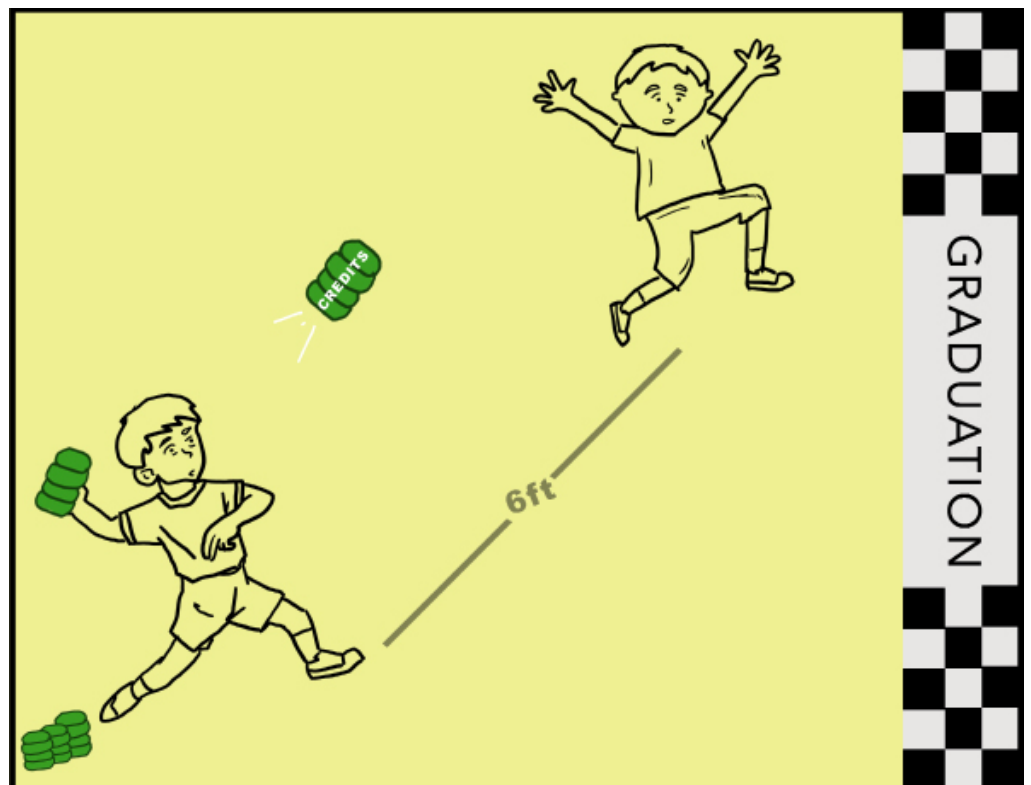
"It's all about learning to adapt when things don't go like we expected, so we're working really hard to be ready for that," Clark said.

Distance learning has undoubtedly limited the capabilities of physical education instruction, however, teachers and students have found new exercises to keep active.

"I really think that PE hasn't suffered much from having to do it online," junior Ryan Allen said. "We've still been exercising a lot and learning new ways to exercise just like in past years."

Ultimately the main priority for teachers and administration centers upon the health and safety of the students and families in the district.

"All these changes will hopefully create a more sanitary environment for the students because that really is our end goal here," Ivankovic said.



Blueprint Photo/Lue Van Handel



# The Importance of a Positive Mindset

## *The mental preparation necessary to perform at your best*

Andrew Habas and Sammy Lee |  
Staff Writers

With all of the physically demanding aspects of sports, the mental aspect is often overlooked or an afterthought to physical performance. However, the mental side of virtually every sport plays a monumental role in the success of an athlete in any given game or event.

While preparation may look different for every athlete, ultimately, tactics and mental preparation methods are apparent in every athlete's pregame ritual. Whether that be pumping themselves up or getting in the zone, and everything in between, athletes find ways to take the nerves out of pregame to perform well come game time.

"Before football games, like all week, you want to be in the zone all the way up until like an hour or two before the game and that's when I usually like to clear my mind and then only about like 30 minutes to 60 minutes before the game is when I kind of get myself back into it," football player and sophomore Mason Michlitsch said.

In fast-paced sports like football, pregame is everything so preparing your mind and body for what is to come is vital.

"You don't want to be thinking about the opposite of what's gonna happen in the game so just having relaxed thoughts help calm my nerves before football, and there is no real way to prepare mentally to take a hit in football," Michlitsch said.

Despite the difference in intensity and physical demand from sport to sport, athletes alike agree that visualizing success on the field before a game, match, or event, will help with overall performance.

"About 45 minutes before my games, I stretch and then visualize. I like to visualize my games and shooting techniques before every game," water polo player and sophomore Austin Bishop said.

Athletes typically learn to visualize success on the field in pregame from coaches and even parents or peers.

"My coach told me it would be good to visualize because it helps with nerves and technique. My dad, who played college water polo, also shared some mental preparation techniques

with me," Bishop said.

Alongside consistent pregame routines to keep calm, treating every game with the same positive mentality can be extremely helpful in relieving any feelings of pressure.

"I treat every game the same and don't really feel pressure based on the size of the event," Bishop said.

While spectators may not be able to recognize the intense mental toughness necessary to perform well, athletes generally credit a good mentality as a crucial part of their success.

"When I'm playing football I try to only have positive thoughts and usually it helps me

perform better," junior Connor McPhail said. "I think having a good mindset really helps and it keeps me calm throughout the game."

With mentality being such a vital part of sports, staying positive or even distracting oneself from the nerves can lead to successful performances. Everything starts with committing to a positive mindset and clearing the mind and body of negative energy.

"I think especially before games, it's important to just clear your mind. So just relaxing your thoughts and then before the game [getting] yourself back up to [that] energy level," Michlitsch said.



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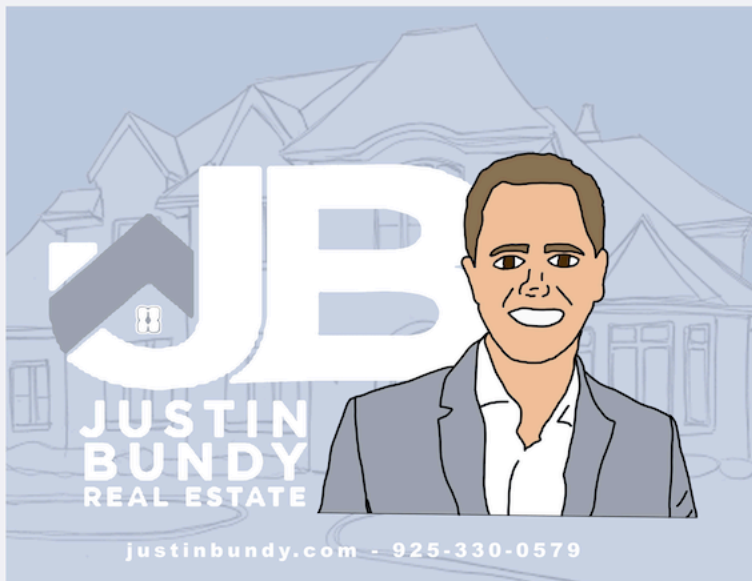
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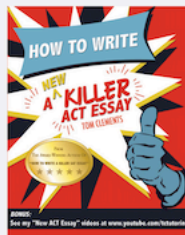
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